Commentary

VOLUME EIGHTY-SIX • NUMBER TWO • AUGUST 1988

Who Killed Poetry?
Joseph Epstein

What the Kiss-and-Tell Books Tell
David Brock

Communism, Anti-Semitism & the Jews
Jerry Z. Muller

Living With Women's Lib
Ruth R. Wisse

A "New Racism" on Campus?
Thomas Short

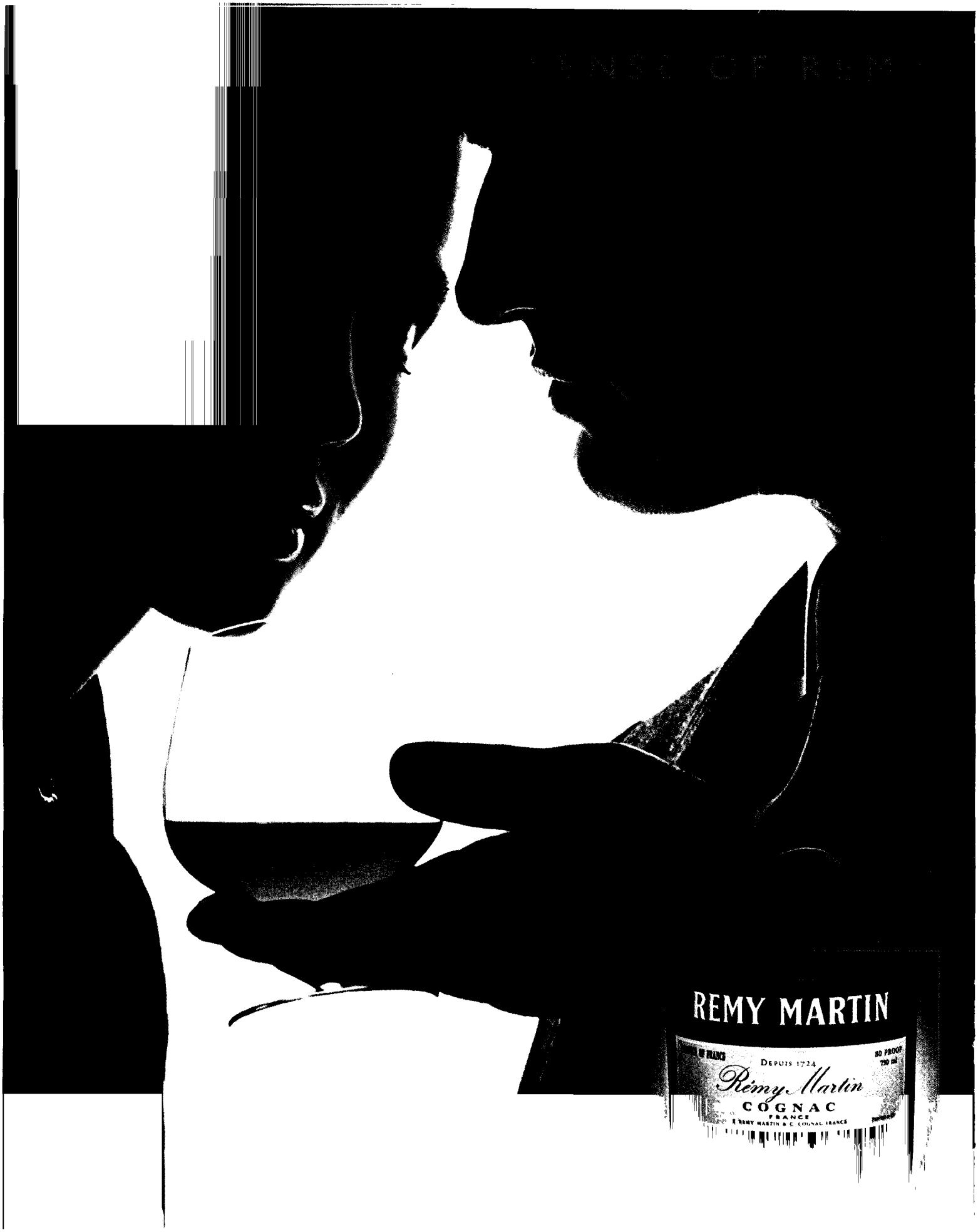
Eyewitness in Gaza
Louis Rapoport

Robert Nisbet's America
Mary Tedeschi Eberstadt

Books in Review: George Russell / Gerald M. Steinberg / Nicholas N. Eberstadt / Terry Teachout / Roger Starr

PUBLISHED BY THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE / $3.50

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Commentary

VOLUME 86 NUMBER TWO *AUGUST 1988*

Articles
13 Who Killed Poetry? *Joseph Epstein*
21 What the Kiss-and-Tell Books Tell *David Brock*
28 Communism, Anti-Semitism & the Jews *Jerry Z. Muller*
40 Living With Women's Lib *Ruth R. Wisse*
46 A "New Racism" on Campus? *Thomas Short*

Observations
51 Eyewitness in Gaza *Louis Rapoport*
55 Robert Nisbet's America *Mary Tedeschi Eberstadt*

Letters
2 from *William Rosenau, Lloyd McAulay, Lorrin S. Anderson, Michael Gold, Lawrence J. Kramer, Anita G. Brown, Richard John Neuhaus, Paul Kennedy, Melville J. Ulmer, Owen Harries, Nicholas Davidson, Michael Levin, Charlotte Low, Ruth Dalin,* and others

Books in Review
60 America Invulnerable, by James Chace and Caleb Carr *George Russell*
64 Zionism: The Crucial Phase, By David Vital *Gerald M. Steinberg*
66 Passage to a Human World, by Max Singer *Nicholas N. Eberstadt*
68 George Balanchine, Ballet Master, by Richard Buckle in collaboration with John Taras *Terry Teachout*
70 Money and Class in America, By Lewis H. Lapham; America's Upper Class, by Nelson W. Aldrich, Jr. *Roger Starr*

Editor: Norman Podhoretz
Executive Editor: Neal Kozodoy
Managing Editor: Marion Magid
Associate Editor: Brenda Brown
Comptroller: Philip Shamis
Production Manager: Bruce Lodi
Circulation Manager: Helene Hansen

COMMENTARY (ISSN 0010-2601) is published monthly by the American Jewish Committee—Single copy is $3.50, $36 a year; 2 years $68, 3 years $99—Add $7.00 per year for all foreign, including Canada and Latin America—Second class postage paid at New York, N.Y. and at additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to COMMENTARY, 165 East 56th St., New York, N.Y. 10022.
Copyright © 1988 by the American Jewish Committee; all rights reserved under International and Pan American Copyright Conventions—Indexed in *Reader's Guide, Book Review Digest, Public Affairs Information Service, Index to Jewish Periodicals, ABC Pol Sci, Historical Abstracts, Religion Index One: Periodicals, Political Science Abstracts,* and *America: History and Life*—Unsolicited manuscripts must be accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed return envelope.
EDITORIAL & BUSINESS OFFICES: 165 E. 56th St., New York, N.Y. 10022

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A Statement of Aims

In sponsoring COMMENTARY, the American Jewish Committee aims to meet the need for a journal of significant thought and opinion on Jewish affairs and contemporary issues. The opinions and views expressed by COMMENTARY's contributors and editors are their own, and do not necessarily express the Committee's viewpoint or position. The sponsorship of COMMENTARY by the Committee is in line with its general program to enlighten and clarify public opinion on problems of Jewish concern, to fight bigotry and protect human rights, and to promote Jewish cultural interest and creative achievement in America.

AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE
Theodore Ellenoff, *President*

The Commentary Publication Committee

Howard I. Friedman, *Chairman*

Morris B. Abram
Norman E. Alexander
Donald M. Blinken
Edward E. Elson
Stephen Friedman
Lawrence Goldmuntz
Mark Goodson
Robert H. Haines
Bess Myerson
Robert L. Pelz
Ned Pines
Frederick P. Rose
Gordon S. Rosenblum
Michael Saperstein
Nanette Scofield
Henry Sherman
John Slawson
Laurence A. Tisch

Letters from Readers

The New Eugenics

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

While I generally agree with the thrust of Richard John Neuhaus's excellent article, "The Return of Eugenics" [April], I am compelled to quibble with an inference he draws from a statement made by the moral philosopher Dame Mary Warnock, the chairman of a British commission on medical ethics. According to Pastor Neuhaus, she is guilty of promoting "the ethics of 'modern emotivism'" when she argues that "'everyone has a right to judge for himself'" on issues of family, birth, and death.

First of all, I am not sure that "modern emotivism" is the right description for such thinking—it sounds more like moral relativism to me. More important, I think Pastor Neuhaus may be misinterpreting Dame Mary's statement and slighting a potential ally. I took her words to mean that panels of bioethicists, theologians, social workers, and other "concerned professionals" have no special qualifications for rendering Solomon-like decisions on matters such as *in vitro* fertilization, the "harvesting" of bodily organs, and the use of human embryos for medical experimentation. There is an obvious analogue in the legal system. We rely on a jury of a defendant's peers—not on a panel of judges, law-school deans, highway patrolmen, and other criminal-justice experts—to render a verdict on his guilt or innocence.

Perhaps we need something similar to a jury system to decide which severely handicapped neonatal infants shall live and which shall die. (As an orthodox Catholic, I would of course prefer to look to Rome for guidance and authority on such matters. It seems unlikely, however, that most American Catholics—let alone society as a whole—would accept the magisterium.)

Letting everyone decide for himself could very well lead to emotivism, relativism, and moral chaos; but to paraphrase William F. Buckley, Jr. (who used the notion in a different context), turning over these thorny moral problems to a group selected at random from the Boston telephone directory is preferable to relying on the medical-ethics industry to make these decisions for us.

WILLIAM ROSENAU
John F. Kennedy School of Government
Harvard University
Cambridge, Massachusetts

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I am pleased that Richard John Neuhaus quoted me in "The Return of Eugenics." I do consider much of genetic engineering to be fast-track breeding and thus in that sense there is little really new under the sun. My phrase "expedited breeding" may well be, as Pastor Neuhaus states, reassuring, but I certainly would not wish to be reassuring about the issue of breeding human beings, whether it be by old-fashioned ineffective eugenic techniques or by new-fashioned more effective eugenic techniques.

Few of us see any moral problem in breeding animal or plant stock. The fact that I would want to be reassuring about new technology in that field hardly suggests that one should be comfortable about applying this new technology to human beings.

To fear new technology because it is artificial is a Luddite reaction. But to be concerned with the new effectiveness that new technology can give to bad programs and bad goals is, I think, an appropriate reaction. In this respect, the Vatican's approach makes sense in emphasizing a basic respect for human life and objecting to interventions not because they are artificial but because they violate the dignity of the human person. I would only suggest that such moral or ethical objections do not apply to interventions in breeding plant and animal stock. . . .

Patenting human life should not and must not be an issue. Human life has to be deemed non-patentable subject matter for reasons of human dignity—that is a dignity we do not accord to frost-resistant alfalfa, borer-resistant corn, or saline-resistant wheat.

I suggest that the fear of new technology causes us to make silly similes between human beings and animal stock which makes it more difficult to focus people's attention on the moral issues which relate to fiddling around with the human genome. As is usually the case, it

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

is critical that distinctions be made as an aid in thinking about the problems raised by Pastor Neuhaus. I suggest at least the following distinctions:

1. The issue of the appropriate scope of extraordinary medical treatment for those over a certain age threshold, such as age eighty-five, although it raises serious issues, has nothing to do with eugenics. The hubris of eugenics is a bit more frightening than the problem of how medical resources are to be allocated.

2. For similar reasons, the use of human tissue, including fetal tissue, is not a question of eugenics, although it, too, like how one treats the very old, does involve questions of human dignity.

3. The hubris of eugenics, including its racist possibilities, simply does not apply either to the classical or to the newer biogenetic modes of breeding plants and animals.

4. Issues of contract motherhood, artificial insemination, and the like raise minimal eugenics issues or at least no more significant issues than do arranged marriages or, for that matter, marriages by preference of the parties involved.

What genetic technology has done, or rather is likely to do in the near future, is to change the statistics for making certain choices. Thus the risks many people were once willing to undertake are seen in a different light. For example, an individual with a genetic recessive disease now takes a chance on marrying and having children and grandchildren where a percentage will have the genetically determined defect or disease or characteristic. Some choose the risk; the most cautious do not. As a society, for some reason, we are comfortable with the result even though it does involve human choice. Perhaps our comfort is due to the fact that the choice does not involve technological intervention. But if one can excise the unwanted gene, the nature of the choice is entirely different. The cautious need not forgo the family. The risk-takers need not impose the unwanted characteristics on future generations.

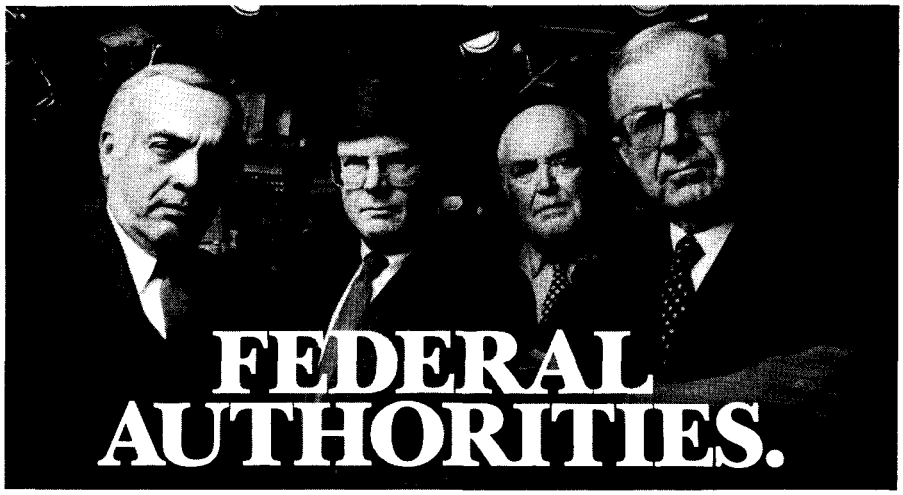
That is a touchy issue on which I for one have no answer. But I think it important that such issues not be confounded by metaphor or simile with improvements of crop and livestock, the allocation of medical resources, contract motherhood, or even the use of human tissue.

LLOYD MCAULAY
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Richard John Neuhaus's "The Return of Eugenics" is a polemic whose disingenuousness starts with its (deliberately?) misleading title. Some of the issues Pastor Neuhaus addresses—like reproductive technology—may involve eugenics, at least potentially. But others simply do not. Whatever one's moral views, the debate over prolonging the lives of the irreversibly comatose, or of grotesquely deformed and retarded infants, has nothing to do with eugenics, since reproduction is not a factor. And in calling eugenics "the movement to improve and even perfect the human species by *technological* means" (emphasis added), Pastor Neuhaus misdefines the term at the outset. Even if one considers sterilization, artificial birth control, or genocidal murder "technological"—and that is stretching it, in the context of Pastor Neuhaus's arguments—the historical focus of eugenics was on *non-technological* social or governmental action to promote breeding by supposedly superior types, or discourage reproduction by the supposedly inferior—the Nazis' notorious *Lebensborn* program and the ultimate mass murder being the extreme examples.

But as Pastor Neuhaus acknowledges, the current debate over the medical ethics of life, death, and reproduction is notable for its general *absence* of racialism. And in fact, organ transplants, fetal-tissue implants, and the like might well be considered *anti-eugenic*, since they prolong life (and perhaps reproductive capacity) in the face of grave physical disabilities. Anti-eugenic implications also surround technologically assisted reproduction by people who could not otherwise have children. That being the case, it is difficult to resist the conclusion that Pastor Neuhaus is raising the specter of a monstrously abused and still discredited movement not to illuminate the debate and point out previously unremarked connections, but to load an essentially unrelated argument in his favor and throw sand in our faces.



THE McLAUGHLIN GROUP Robert Novak. Morton Kondracke. Jack Germond. And, of course, John McLaughlin.

They're award-winning journalists on the Washington scene. Every week on "The McLaughlin Group" they deliver riveting commentary on issues and people of national importance.

So if you're interested in where the trends are headed, tune in to this feisty political talk show. These authorities take the issues seriously, not themselves.

Made possible by a grant from GE.

Check your local listing for station and time.

We bring good things to life.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I have no particular desire to joust with Pastor Neuhaus in the ethical thicket surrounding reproductive technology, fetal tissue, and the extraction of reusable organs from anencephalic babies. But on the question of euthanasia and the artificial prolongation of life, I would like to point out that we are on a slippery slope no matter which way we turn. If we reject euthanasia under any and all circumstances, the "hellish center" at the bottom of that particular slope is living death for uncounted millions, at God knows what cost in personal suffering and familial anguish. Not to mention the cold but inescapable fact that the entire Gross National Product probably could not pay for giving everybody as much "life" as modern medicine is already capable of providing.

Even if one approaches the question from a religious point of view (which I do not), one might well argue that negation of divine will lies not in allowing people to die naturally, when their time comes, but in keeping them alive mechanically when life has run its course and lost all conceivable value for them or anyone else.

Pastor Neuhaus would point out that it is only a short step from "allowing people to die naturally" to actually killing them. And of course he would be right. I confess that in cases involving the terminally comatose or anencephalic babies, my own view is that a lethal injection, administered under stringent legal safeguards and with clear familial consent, is far more humane and ethically justifiable than starvation.

Discussing the Dutch experience with euthanasia, Pastor Neuhaus mentions anecdotal accounts by unnamed Hollanders of "a striking upsurge in the suspicion expressed by the elderly and sick toward doctors, hospitals, and their own families." Perhaps; I have no way of knowing. I do know that here in America my own mother, in good spirits but somewhat precarious health, and all too familiar, at eighty-one, with doctors and hospitals, is terrified not of death but of the possibility that she might someday be forced to linger in a hellish twilight, stripped of all control over her own life, bedeviled by tubes and machines, unable to demand release.

LORRIN S. ANDERSON
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In his thoughtful article, Richard John Neuhaus raises serious questions regarding the use of new medical technologies both at the beginning and end of life. Unfortunately, in his alarm about the slippery slope, Pastor Neuhaus has attacked many of the procedures which have truly helped answer the prayers of infertile couples.

Pastor Neuhaus brings the most egregious examples to oppose artificial insemination, *in vitro* fertilization, and surrogate motherhood. Insemination with donor sperm is rarely done so that a single woman can have a child who "would have an intimate bond to no one but herself." More frequently, a married couple will use donor sperm when they desperately want a baby and the husband is sterile.

In vitro fertilization is an expensive, complicated procedure which has helped thousands of couples become parents where the wife has blocked fallopian tubes. I have argued that if we had called the procedure "fallopian tube bypass surgery" rather than "test-tube babies," our society would not have thought twice about it. The Baby M case was painful, but thousands of other surrogate-mother arrangements have gone smoothly to the satisfaction of all parties.

These techniques do not involve "the manufacture of synthetic children, the fabrication of families, [and] artificial sex," as Pastor Neuhaus writes. Children conceived by these techniques are real human beings created in the image of God. In my book, *And Hannah Wept: Infertility, Adoption, and the Jewish Couple* (Jewish Publication Society, 1988), I argue that rather than playing God, we human beings are God's partners in helping make the creation of life possible. In Jewish religious tradition, there is a precedent for each of these techniques when a commandment as important as "Be fruitful and multiply" is involved.

Pastor Neuhaus comments that more couples do not adopt because the "right kind" of children are not available. He claims that "adoption is one area where discrimination on the basis of race or handicap is still eminently respectable." As an adoptive father, I take particular umbrage at this statement. Choosing what kind of child to adopt cannot be compared to choosing whom to serve at a lunch counter. It is true that there are many handicapped and minority youngsters waiting to be adopted, but it is unfair to lay a guilt trip on infertile couples to solve this difficult problem.

I found it interesting that Pastor Neuhaus quoted the feminist writer Katha Pollitt who said, "You don't have a right to a child, . . . you only have a right to try to have one." These are almost precisely the words used by the Catholic Church in a recent document which outlawed the new reproductive techniques: "Marriage does not confer upon spouses the right to have a child, but only the right to perform those natural acts which are *per se* ordered to procreations."

When a respected thinker like Richard John Neuhaus joins with bedfellows as strange as the feminist movement and the Catholic Church to condemn the new reproductive techniques, it only adds to the pain of infertile couples.

[RABBI] MICHAEL GOLD
Beth El Congregation
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . Richard John Neuhaus claims that the "slippery slope" is a useful metaphor with which to describe the path of moral degradation. "I believe in the slippery slope," he writes, "the same way that I believe in the Hudson River. It's there."

Not quite. The "slippery slope" is an assumption, not an observation such as yields awareness of the Hudson River. We do not know the gradients of many such possible slopes, nor do we know when they begin and end, for many potential acts are not initiated, and many events initiated do not run their conceivable full course.

GWYNNE NETTLER
San Diego, California

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Richard John Neuhaus's article was as thoughtful and provocative a piece as we have come to expect from his pen. . . . He reminds us that "no one can be sure" whether the anencephalic feel pain. When I read that sentence, I glimpsed the whole dense, tangled "problem of other minds" familiar from academic symposia peeping into the pressing, quite nonacademic goings-on at Loma Linda University Medical Center and elsewhere.

A philosopher answers a question with a question: if you ask, "How do we know whether this

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

infant feels pain?" he will answer, "How do you know that *I* ever feel pain?" How does anyone ever know that there are minds in the world except for one's own? Why not believe that all bodies except one's own are mindless automata? Such a premise would certainly solve most, if not all, of the quandaries of medical ethics at a single Alexandrian stroke.

Most of us outside the psychiatric wards refuse to cut any knots with that particular sword, though I believe that you have a mind, and sensations; that you have a subjective nature, which certainly includes the capacity for pain. Why do I believe this? It is *not* the conscious development of an inference founded upon an analogy between your body and mine. It is something that is more certain than any inferential process and thus it is one of the core premises whence any ethical inferences must proceed. In our day, it seems, the core is melting in an ethical Chernobyl.

In another world, a long time ago, there was no need to speak of such minimalist, modernist conceptions as a "subjective nature." The monosyllabic word was *soul*. I have a soul, and I have a set of religious convictions that tell me that you have one too, and that (a contemporary example) a bat, for instance, does not have a soul. If you find a good medical use for a bat's heart, you are free to kill the bat and make use of that organ. But an infant human does have a soul, and you have no such right to its heart.

It is this soul-ful consensus that we have lost. There is no good prospect of returning to it, so we are going to have to get a new ... consensus of some sort.... Until such a consensus emerges (through an appeal to a "good beyond emotion," as Pastor Neuhaus rightly says), bioethics will continue its drift toward the justification of whatever is already being done. . . .

CHRISTOPHER C. FAILLE
Bridgeport, Connecticut

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . Richard John Neuhaus's sterling treatment of eugenics might also serve to redefine the word. The usual dictionary definition—"The science of improving the human race"—serves as the eugenicists' public cover. A more informative definition might be, "The goal of molding the human race in the image of the goal-holder." . . .

The outcome in real-life eugenics will depend on who is in charge. Imagine the Ku Klux Klan in charge of the United States Eugenics Directorate. . . . There are innumerable other neighbor-against-neighbor scenarios. The one that is currently the most popular features age disparities, urging the discarding (or "utilizing" for organ and fetal-tissue traffic) of those who are too young, too old, too mute, or too friendless to fend for themselves. . . .

If, as I have said, eugenics is the goal of molding the human race in the image of the goal-holder, let us hope that idiot next door doesn't get the job.

D. COOK
Solon, Maine

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . COMMENTARY is to be commended for publishing Richard John Neuhaus's sensible and sincere challenge to "progressive thinking" in the biomedical-industry complex.

I do have one point of criticism, though. How is it possible for COMMENTARY to publish an article on the subject of biomedical ethics without mention of the long tradition of Jewish concern, interest, law, and morals devoted to this topic? . . .

In the film *Judgment at Nuremburg*, the German Minister of Law, Ernst Janning, remarks: "I didn't know it would come to that [the murder of millions]." The American judge replies: "It happened the first time you sentenced one innocent man."

Our society must know we have already sentenced too many innocents. We are well down the slippery slope.

[RABBI] EUGENE A. WERNICK
Temple Beth El
Allentown, Pennsylvania

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . Nowhere in Richard John Neuhaus's article do we find a framework for analysis. Instead, the article lumps together, under the heading "eugenics project," two entirely separate moral phenomena, mercy killing and health-care rationing, neither of which has anything to do with eugenics, no matter how long and how hard Pastor Neuhaus says otherwise. We are set the hypothetical case of four important patients who could be saved by the murder of a mentally deficient nobody, and told that ethicists are today debating such a case as a moral dilemma. Bunk. No one entertains that hypothetical dilemma after sophomore year in college. People do, however, debate the morality of permitting or even assisting the death of someone who is terminally ill, in constant pain, unable to breathe without a machine, and on written record as not wanting to be kept alive by respirator without real hope of recovery. And well they should.

Euthanasia is an important subject, and not one to be dismissed as the first step toward the next Reich. It is not about improving the race, nor is it about getting rid of the unwanted. It is about ending suffering. For the first time, well-intentioned doctors can knowingly prolong death in the name of prolonging life. Through the wonders of science, we can now imprison a fellow human in an infirm and hostile body for as long as we want. This cannot continue, and it will not, even if those who eventually pull the plug have a financial stake in the decision. What would Pastor Neuhaus do for these unfortunates consigned to medicine's death row, wanting, needing, deserving peace? By his silence, he tells them to linger on, twisting slowly in the moral wind, living (?) proof that nothing is impossible for the man who does not have to do it himself. For this relief, they will no doubt accord him much thanks. (The opportunity to use a patient's organs for transplants is irrelevant to all this except insofar as the patient has also asked to be an organ donor. Of course, to hear Pastor Neuhaus tell it, the chance to save a life while ending pain somehow brings out the worst in us.)

Likewise, the suggestion by Daniel Callahan, director of the Hastings Center, that we deny free heroic care to the very old has nothing to do with eugenics. Medical rationing is about triage, allocating emergency medical care to those it will save and denying it to those it will not. Some day, there will not be enough government-paid health care to go around. When the shortage comes, triage will come with it. Pastor Neuhaus suggests that this unhappy truce with reality is also part of the eugenics project because it judges the worth of old people's lives and takes those lives only after declaring them, in accordance with Nazi doctrine, not worth living. This, too, is nonsense.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Rationing on the basis of the patient's age may be the best way to avoid eugenics. Despite recent efforts to turn agedness into a category like race, it is something we all get if we live long enough, and, in a society with our history, that makes it a remarkably fair basis for rationing anything. Thus, denying life-support to the very old does not judge the quality of life but merely estimates its quantity, without regard to any of the invidious categorizations or subjective judgments on which a eugenics project would work, if there were a eugenics project. We can disagree on whether a shortage of care-givers or funds to pay them exists at any given moment, or about whether it will ever exist at all. We can even argue about whether all care, or just tax-bought care, should be rationed. What we cannot do is delay the shortage by rejecting its consequences, including morally difficult choices.

LAWRENCE J. KRAMER
Penn Valley, Pennsylvania

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Peter Singer may or may not have said what Richard John Neuhaus attributes to him, that "your average pig has more consciousness and therefore more right to protection than fetuses or human beings suffering from severe disabilities." If he actually said it, it was in an unguarded moment (or in his cups) during the worst part of the 60's. As Pastor Neuhaus himself recognizes, "Other animal-rights advocates have exhibited some ambivalence toward this line of argument, knowing that it is human beings, not pigs, that they need to persuade of the rightness of their cause." That being so, it is perhaps gratuitous, even a trifle cruel, of Pastor Neuhaus to remind Singer in 1988 of what the latter no doubt has since come to be thoroughly embarrassed by and even ashamed of. I say let sleeping dogs—and singers and pigs—lie.

HAROLD J. HARRIS
Kalamazoo College
Kalamazoo, Michigan

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I can never read about abortion and the importance of human existence without placing them in the general context of all life. That is to say, since we are not the only species here, we should temper our thoughts and actions with that supremely in mind. I wonder if it has occurred to many of us that we are the most dispensable of all life forms. Still, we act as though we are the most important. This planet evolved for many eons without our help. I hate to think what the "finished" product would have looked like had we been involved in the process. . . .

In our comparatively brief time on earth, we have managed to reshape its face, insofar as we could, in our own image and in the process have brought about many disasters that would not have otherwise occurred had we either been more intelligent or, like the rest of the animal kingdom, acted more out of instinct.

By our sheer numbers we are relentlessly displacing in the Americas, Asia, Africa, and elsewhere life to which we cannot even begin to assign a value. With the destruction of the tropical rain forests will go plants that could have provided future pharmaceuticals and seed grain and raw materials for industry. Diversity is the stuff of life, but we are reducing it every day that passes and, with that reduction, limiting future options for all life. . . .

As to the use of fetal tissue, I can raise no objection. Abortion, with or without legalization, has always existed and will so continue. The reproductive urge in mankind, as in all of the animal and vegetable kingdoms, is essentially instinctual, and in the absence of any intelligent thought and action will result in pregnancy, wanted or unwanted. We now, although it has not been long so, readily accept the transplantation of organs and tend to think of the waste involved if organs cannot be recovered from those who have no further use for them for those who do. . . . Therefore, I think it is a bright spot in the abortion picture if this fetal tissue can sustain and improve the lives of others. I equate fetal with other transplants. . . .

There has also been concern about some of the aspects of surrogate parenting; the few cases gone awry notwithstanding, this practice seems ethical to me. As to the issue of anencephalic human neonates as donors, I think the real crime would be to doom a child who might otherwise live so that a hopeless case can deteriorate naturally. I might as well add here that I am a member of the Society for the Right to Die and believe in euthanasia. My greatest fear is not that I will be mischievously disposed of prematurely, but that I might become totally paralyzed, comatose for an extended period of time, or wind up in a persistent vegetative state.

We all recoil at one thing or another, . . . but we cannot turn back the tide of scientific manipulation, and I doubt that we will be able to resolve the moral/ethical aspects fast enough to keep up with the work going on in the laboratories.

The abortion question, I believe, will soon be largely solved by better contraceptive methods. . . . Contraception is the answer. It has to be the answer. We owe it to this planet with all its inhabitants to halt the doubling and tripling of our human numbers.

ANITA G. BROWN
Colorado Springs, Colorado

RICHARD JOHN NEUHAUS writes:

William Rosenau offers a very charitable construction of Dame Mary Warnock's argument. I might, with him, wish that that is what she meant, but, regrettably, his construction is not supported by her own painfully clear argument. Modern emotivism is, I believe, the accurate term for her position, although Mr. Rosenau is right in suggesting that the result of that position is commonly referred to as moral relativism. Mr. Rosenau proposes other possible ways "to decide which severely handicapped neonatal infants shall live and which shall die." I would suggest that such decisions are rarely imposed upon us. More typically, people elect the decisions over which they then agonize, or claim to agonize, with such exquisite pain of conscience. That is, such decisions assume prior decisions about lives not worth living or about lives that, if terminated, can be used to benefit others. If we refuse to make those prior decisions, we discover that the burden of subsequent, agonizing choices is happily reduced. If I refuse to terminate innocent lives, I do not need to decide which lives to terminate. (This is to supplement, and not to disagree with, what I take to be Mr. Rosenau's main point.)

I am pleased that Lloyd McAulay insists upon such a clear distinction between human and animal life. He says that the patenting of human life "should not and must

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

not be an issue." Regrettably, it is an issue, as evidenced by the discussions alluded to in my article. Whether the uses of fetal tissue or the provision of medical care to the aged is related to "the hubris of eugenics" depends on what we mean by eugenics.

That is a question raised also by Lorrin S. Anderson, whose letter testifies to the force of passion aroused by this subject. My comprehensive definition of eugenics is fully supported by the history and literature of the eugenics movement in this country and elsewhere. The vaulting aims of the champions of that movement are indeed all-inclusive. In this way of thinking, eugenics is usually synonymous with the less common term "euthenics," which is the science of assuring human well-being and efficiency. The purpose is to impose, through technology and political decision, rational control over the exigencies of the human condition, including those factors more narrowly related to genetics and reproduction. The "given" or the "natural" is to be defied or denied in the course of progress toward man without limits. Mr. Anderson and others greatly underestimate the ambitious assumptions, sometimes tacit but often articulated, that motor the developments I have described as the return of eugenics.

Fortunately, Mr. Anderson is wrong in thinking we must choose between euthanasia and a mechanically sustained "living death for uncounted millions." Existing law and traditional ethics do not require that disproportionate means be employed to prolong the course of dying. A cancer patient, for example, is neither morally nor legally required to undergo chemotherapy. What is now forbidden is euthanasia, that is, intervention directly aimed at the termination of innocent human life. In most but not all cases, that includes the withdrawal of food and fluids. Mr. Anderson confirms my point in the article that, once euthanasia by starvation and dehydration is accepted in principle, people would prefer faster and cleaner means, such as the lethal injection.

In response to Rabbi Michael Gold, I do not "lay a guilt trip" on adoptive parents who are discriminating with respect to the children they adopt. I do note that this is one area where discrimination on the basis of race or handicap is eminently respectable, and I think it worth asking why this should be so. In adoption, and even more so in the instances of artificial reproduction discussed, there is an obvious concern for quality control. One need be neither a feminist nor a Roman Catholic to suggest that this is not the best way to think about babies. Rabbi Gold is obviously eager to make people feel good about what they have done, and that can be commendable. I am somewhat surprised, however, that he indicates no concern for the questions of human dignity engaged by the exploitation or elimination of "superfluous" embryos in certain reproduction techniques. And I wonder if he really means to claim that "thousands" of surrogate-mother arrangements "have gone smoothly to the satisfaction of all parties." Although less publicized than the Baby M case, there are many well-known instances of unhappiness, remorse, and recrimination issuing from such arrangements. And, of course, we have not yet heard from the chief parties concerned, namely, the children who will grow up with deeply conflicted ideas about whose children they are, and about the deals by which they were obtained. Rabbi Gold's eagerness to smooth the moral way for what people want to do is understandable, but one may be permitted to wonder whether it might turn out to be a disservice to the people he so obviously wants to help.

Gwynne Nettler urges that I do not know about the slippery slope the way I know about the Hudson River because I do not know the slope's gradients, or where it begins or ends, or what may eventually happen to it. But I do not know those things about the Hudson River, either, and yet I know there's a Hudson River. The slippery slope is a metaphor for a reality that is recognized by "observation such as yields awareness of the Hudson River." In both cases, the awareness of the reality is not dependent upon detailed knowledge about it. Because I agree with her that "many events initiated do not run their

Increase your interest in Israel

Ampal now offers

11%	**FIFTEEN YEAR ZERO COUPON**	• $10,000 yields $47,847 in 15 years • Non callable • May be put after 5 years at a 10% yield to early maturity
10%	**FIXED RATE CURRENT INCOME**	• $10,000 minimum • **$100,000+ discounted to 97%** • Redeemable after 5 years at 100%
PRIME +1%	**VARIABLE RATE CURRENT INCOME**	• $5,000 minimum priced at 100% • **$100,000+ discounted to 98.5%** • Minimum rate 7.5% • No maximum rate • Due Nov. 1, 1992

- You pay no commissions because the underwriter receives a concession from the issuer.
- 100% of your investment goes to work immediately for you and for Israel.
- Principal and interest are payable in U.S. dollars.

For more information and a prospectus for any of the securities described above, call Ampal Securities Corporation:

1-800-445-6508

In Wisconsin: (414) 352-8870

Member NASD and SIPC

This is neither an offer to sell nor a solicitation of an offer to buy securities. The offer is made only by the prospectus which may be obtained in any state wherein the underwriter may lawfully offer the securities.

FIRMLY ROOTED IN ISRAEL, BRANCHING OUT IN NEW DIRECTIONS

AMPAL

AMERICAN ISRAEL CORPORATION

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

conceivable full course," I thought it might serve a purpose to write a cautionary article against the course of the eugenics movement.

Christopher C. Faille is surely right about a "minimalist" mindset that can neither accommodate the idea of the soul nor comprehend the meaning of its loss. He is probably right that there is no "good prospect" of retrieving that understanding of what distinguishes human beings from bats, but we have not the right to despair of the possibility.

D. Cook gets us back to definitions, and his formulation ("The goal of molding the human race in the image of the goal-holder") is helpful for understanding what is happening in the return of eugenics.

In response to Rabbi Eugene A. Wernick, I am well aware of the long history of Jewish reflection on these issues and had no intention of slighting that. I must agree, alas, with Rabbi Wernick's estimate of where we are on the slope.

Lawrence J. Kramer takes us back yet once more to the dispute over a constrictive or inclusive definition of eugenics. Perhaps enough has been said on that. "Bunk," argues Mr. Kramer in response to my report on the kinds of questions in dispute today. I can only refer him once again to the relevant literature. Mr. Kramer too poses the false choice between technically prolonged dying and euthanasia, about which see above. He asserts that euthanasia is unrelated to the other developments I discuss. Euthanasia, he says quite simply, "is about ending suffering." Well, yes, but ending suffering is a rather comprehensive project. In California, the effort to put euthanasia on the November ballot, which failed this time around, was organized by Americans Against Human Suffering, the political arm of the Hemlock Society. By the logic of that effort, the organization might also be called Americans Against Suffering Humans.

My article attempted to explore the connections between eliminating suffering and eliminating the sufferers, and I am sorry that, rather than addressing himself to that exploration, Mr. Kramer dismisses out of hand any possible connection. I am afraid that he also misrepresents Daniel Callahan's thinking about the denial of life-extending care to the very old. Mr. Callahan does not propose "triage." The source of Mr. Kramer's certitude about the distinction between quantity and quality of life is unclear. On the other hand, his determined refusal to entertain the possibility of analogies between Nazi Germany and our situation is both understandable and widely shared. In any event, apodictic dismissives such as "bunk" and "nonsense" are not helpful in clarifying Mr. Kramer's difficulties with my argument.

Harold J. Harris appears to know Peter Singer personally. I do not. Certainly I know nothing about what he is given to saying when he is in his cups, if he ever is in his cups. I do read Peter Singer and can assure Mr. Harris that the statement in question is not an errant indiscretion but representative of the kind of argument he advances, to considerable acclaim in some circles. It is an argument to which Anita G. Brown seems to be sympathetic. That human beings "are the most dispensable of all life forms" is a thought that would, so far as we know, occur only to human beings. However fatuous the thought, I think the world would be greatly diminished by the absence of creatures capable of thinking it.

Mrs. Brown presents the case for what has come to be called "speciesism," and it is surely part of the wondrously complicated glory of human beings that we are the only species that raises questions about the self-evident good of its continuation. We are also the only species that thinks about what, as Mrs. Brown puts it, "we owe . . . to this planet." Since the ecological consciousness that Mrs. Brown cherishes depends entirely upon us, she should perhaps think again about our dispensability. Or perhaps she would say that, without the environmental crimes perpetrated by human beings, ecological consciousness would not be necessary. There is almost no end to the amazing things that human beings might say. Which is one reason why I wish our species well, and hope Mrs. Brown is wrong in thinking that our moral reflection cannot keep up with what is happening to us in our laboratories—and in our own minds.

America in Decline?

To the Editor of Commentary:

Given our different perspectives, it would be silly of me to carp at Owen Harries's lengthy discussion of my book, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, in his article, "The Rise of American Decline" [May], even where I think he has misunderstood what I wrote. As for the larger issue, time alone will tell whose views of the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China—as well as of the United States—will be shown to have been the more accurate.

But I would like to point out an intriguing historical fact. Whenever a debate about "relative decline" has occurred—be it in the Spain of Philip IV, the Britain of Edward VII, or the United States of Ronald Reagan—there has always emerged a group of arch-patriotic, emotional conservatives denying that any decline has taken place. Analogies with previous Great Powers are false, they assert, because one's own society possesses superior virtues. The only danger, they add grimly, would come from a loss of will power. By contrast, they have paid little attention to economic trends since that would be (to use a phrase) "materialist."

This fixation with will power is a curious one, since no one at the time doubted the determination and patriotism of the Castilian gentry, or of the British officers who charged forward onto the barbed wire and machine guns of Flanders. Similarly, by 1945 no one could doubt the will power displayed by Waffen-SS divisions, or by Japanese troops in the Pacific war. What they all lacked, at the end of the day, were the necessary material underpinnings to remain a successful Great Power.

It occurs to me that, by emphasizing will power over wisdom, and external "firmness" over internal restructuring, today's conservatives are in danger of repeating the pattern of history which they seek to deny. Would that not be a curious (and costly) irony?

Paul Kennedy
Yale University
New Haven, Connecticut

To the Editor of Commentary:

In his insightful article, Owen Harries effectively skewers one of the most mischievous notions of our times: that American economic power is declining, and destined to continue doing so, and that the lone hope for retarding this descent is to drop our military guard against the Soviet Union. By eco-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

nomic "power" is meant output per capita as well as gross production. A corollary of the proposition is that the might and menace of the Soviet Union have been gravely overestimated. This is the thesis that Mr. Harries has succeeded in exposing, from under a heavy coating of erudition, in Paul Kennedy's *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*. In the process he refutes Kennedy's argument at every point with documented evidence from the Defense Department, economics expert Herbert Stein, and others.

What Mr. Harries fails to point out—though an implication may be there—is that Kennedy's opus is simply an effort to construct a pretentious foundation of historical inevitability for a refrain familiar on America's Left for a decade or more. Especially since Ronald Reagan's initial ascent to the presidency, our domestic radicals and ultraliberals have amplified their cries that the U.S. has fallen from world economic leadership to the status of a second-class nation, its wealth dissipated by a misperceived need to build the fabulously expensive implements of war. Their favorite remedy for at least *retarding* the decline is, of course, a major cut in military outlays. To *reverse* the descent they further recommend a broad-based program of central economic planning, complete (in most versions) with worker-owned and community-owned industrial enterprises.

Literally hundreds of articles, books, and studies have been produced on this theme, some even winning publication by the Joint Economic Committee of Congress. Naturally they differ in details, but not otherwise. The best-known landmarks in the crusade are *Greed Is Not Enough* (1982) by Robert Lekachman, *The Deindustrialization of America* (1982) by Barry Bluestone and Bennett Harrison, *The Zero Sum Society* (1980) and *The Zero-Sum Solution* (1985), both by Lester C. Thurow.

One of the most reliable characteristics of all such publications is a determined disregard of inconvenient facts, a trait shared with the book Mr. Harries reviewed. For example, while Thurow lamented in the last-named volume how pitifully the United States trailed its trading partners in productive prowess, the U.S.'s real GNP per capita, when measured by purchasing power parity indexes, exceeded West Germany's by 33 percent, Japan's by 41 percent, and Great Britain's by fully 51 percent. Productivity trends since then suggest that the United States's lead has widened.

MELVILLE J. ULMER
Potomac, Maryland

OWEN HARRIES writes:

Paul Kennedy maintains that, faced with decline, conservatives have a fixation with will power, and he finds this curious. I, in turn, find it curious that this is the only point he makes in response to an article that did not so much as mention will power.

I cannot speak for the Castilian gentry and those who fell at Flanders, but the piece I wrote was not fixated on will or anything else. On the contrary, my main criticism of Mr. Kennedy's book was, precisely, that it failed to give an adequate account of the *plurality* of factors that interact in complicated ways to determine the rise and fall of Great Powers.

His attempt to represent the difference between us in terms of an obsession with will power versus a wise appreciation of material strength is so wide of the mark, therefore, as to be baffling.

That having been said, I readily plead guilty to believing that some of the things that the term "will power" brings to mind—high morale, commitment to the high values and institutions of one's society, leadership capable of uniting and inspiring, a concern to prevail in adversity—are important ingredients in the makeup of a successful nation. They are sources of strength not only in the fighting of wars but in taking the kind of action that prevents wars from occurring. Does Mr. Kennedy really disagree?

My thanks to Melville J. Ulmer for his kind remarks. As for his one criticism, I did not describe *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers* as "simply an effort to construct a pretentious foundation of historical inevitability etc.," because I had no idea what Paul Kennedy's mo-

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The Brandeis-Bardin Institute is dedicated to providing an environment which promotes a pluralistic but united approach to the Jewish community. This is accomplished through programming for youth, family, college students and adults.

The Executive Director provides professional expertise to the staff (encompassing education/programming, development and financial - administration areas) and Board of Directors, and manages the operation of the Institute. Primary responsibilities include promoting community relations, administering personnel, managing financial development, facilities, operations and the delivery of quality programming.

Requires extensive experience in:

* The management of a major not-for-profit Institution
* Public speaking
* Institutional fund raising and financial management
* Managing a professional staff & working with a Board of Directors
* Problem resolution
* Managing facilities

This Jewishly committed individual will have demonstrated strong skills in decision making, problem solving, human interaction, and verbal and written communications.

Please send your confidential resume, salary history and cover letter to:

Mr. Stuart Raffel
Chairman - Search Committee
Brandeis-Bardin Institute
Brandeis, California 93064

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tives were in writing his book. But clearly many have welcomed it as providing such a foundation

Men and Women

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I would like to take issue, in a friendly way, with two points Charlotte Low makes in her generally favorable dual review of my book, *The Failure of Feminism,* and Michael Levin's *Feminism and Freedom* [Books in Review, May].

The first point concerns Miss Low's statement that both books rely "not so much on common sense—which would suffice—as on an odd collection of pseudo-scientific theories of a sociological stripe." With due respect, common sense *never* suffices. It must be affiliated with other things—faith, reason, science, or all of these—if it is not to become common nonsense.

One of the worst things feminism does is indeed to divorce people from common sense about men and women. But the principal reason feminism can wreak havoc on common sense is that the ground has been prepared in advance. The idea of environmental determinism serves a very specific function for social reformers. It is used to convince people that their own experience is useless as a basis for generalization—for one's experience would be so different, in a different culture, that to use mere personal perception as a basis for understanding is absurd. Ordinary citizens are thus reduced to dependency on "experts" for reliable information, and are in effect reduced to intellectual passivity and, hence, pliability.

Now, there is no way to refute this idea in terms of common sense. The refutation of environmental determinism requires extensive ethnographic data and an adequate explanation for whatever patterns the data present. The road back to common sense must pass through the terrain of science.

It is therefore disconcerting, in a magazine of COMMENTARY's caliber, to see a cavalier dismissal of the work of Steven Goldberg, which Miss Low gives as her unique example of pseudo-science. Goldberg's great contribution is that he has shown, decisively and finally, that all the reports of sexually egalitarian and female-dominated societies are false. I challenge Miss Low to refute the validity of Goldberg's findings. She will not be able to do so.

It is possible, more plausibly, to disagree with the explanatory theory Goldberg puts forward. But to sneer at his work as pseudo-science is to trash standards.

The second point concerns the need for men to reclaim at least half the input in gender issues. Miss Low concludes by saying "there is much to welcome in the message both Davidson and Levin bring us. One wonders when we will start hearing it from women." She clearly assumes that criticism of feminism is somehow more legitimate, more important, when it comes from women. On the contrary: by abdicating their responsibility to direct society in its intimate as well as its politico-economic aspects, men have brought on the current mess. Women by themselves will be quite helpless to clean it up—one reason for which is that most feminine women eschew public activism, leaving a clear field for the Friedans, Ehrenreichs, and Dworkins. That, too, is in the nature of the case.

NICHOLAS DAVIDSON
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In what was apparently meant to be a favorable review, Charlotte Low complains that my book, *Feminism and Freedom,* contains much pseudo-science. This is an extremely serious charge which, if correct, would render my book intellectually valueless. (Pseudo-science, after all, is the product of cranks and crackpots.) It is unfortunate, therefore, that she cited no examples of pseudo-science. Did she have in mind the work of neuro-endocrinologists that I cite? Or Steven Goldberg's idea that a feedback loop between biologically innate differences and reinforcement is a simpler account of extant sex roles than "socialization"?

It is simply not enough to say, especially in the current climate of opinion, that "common sense" will do. If the determinativeness of innate sex differences is denied, then feminists must be right that all sex-role differentiation is social in origin. If this is so, not only does my thesis that feminism entails coercion collapse, so do all systematic arguments against feminist excess.

Perhaps in the future COMMENTARY will assign books with scientific content to reviewers who are competent to understand it.

MICHAEL LEVIN
City University of New York
New York City

CHARLOTTE LOW writes:

Don't shoot, I admit it! I'm no scientist. But neither Michael Levin (philosophy is his domain, says the book jacket of *Feminism and Freedom*) nor Nicholas Davidson (he's just a "writer," says his blurb) claims to be a scientist, either. Despite gaps in my education, I have picked up a few things, mainly that while life is short, evolution is long, very long. This lends a mysterious quality to the evolutionary process, and it makes the process of human evolution, if there has been any, mysterious to the point of inexplicability.

I was perhaps too harsh on the sociobiologists, but in some ways they deserve it. Sociobiology—the study of the social life of animals—is marvelous as a descriptive science. It's fun to see, for example, how wolves organize themselves into a social hierarchy based on strength and leadership qualities and how the stronger, sharper males pick off the choicer she-wolves, just as humans do. A visit to the county fair will reveal that cows are so placid and maternal-looking that they might as well be wearing earrings and carrying handbags, while the bulls act like guys watching the fights on closed-circuit television. Male and female created He them, and so He did.

But when sociobiology takes a speculative turn, particularly in speculating on how human beings came to be the kind of creatures they are, it runs into a rut—which is why I called it "pseudo-scientific." Creatures even remotely resembling human beings—and we don't know whether they were ancestors, uncles, or cousins—have been on this planet for only about two million years, less than the blink of an eye in evolutionary terms. The more we learn about these shadowy forebears, in fact, the less "human" they seem. The oldest distinctly human settlements, of the fire-building, funeral-holding Neanderthals, are only about 200,000 years old. By 70,000 B.C.E., human culture was quite sophisticated: the Cro-Magnons decorated their caves, sewed their clothes, played musical instruments, and made animal carvings that resemble those of the Es-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

kimos. In short, they lived like the hunter-gatherers of today. Studying these folk is the domain of the historian and the cultural anthropologist, not the sociobiologist. There has been little time for humans to "evolve" into or out of much of anything. From what we know, they have always been pretty much like today's human beings.

Thus, it seems to me that sociobiology has had to step into the purely fanciful to explain why we act or even look the way we do. My favorite theories are those of Desmond Morris, who believes that the human face derives in appearance from the human derrière, because our ancestors found hindquarters sexy. Isn't that circular reasoning?

This does not mean that I believe traditional sex roles are pure cultural determinations; they are obviously based on innate differences between the masculine and the feminine. But patriarchy, although it has its parallels in animal harems, is a distinct and marvelously beneficent human creation, in which men voluntarily take on the responsibility of supporting and raising the children they have fathered and supporting their mother so she can nurture the young ones.

That is why common sense—the exercise of ordinary human observation and reason—seems to provide quite an adequate base for assessing the foolishness of women's-studies programs and unisex athletics as well as the wisdom of traditional human institutions that recognize male and female differences. Furthermore, although I, like Mr. Davidson, find it distressing that most men of the last two decades have rolled over and played wimp at every ukase from the feminist trumpet, I believe that, for efforts to stem the slash-and-burn tactics of the feminist movement to seem credible, much less succeed, they must come, for the most part, from sensible women.

The Homeless

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Thomas J. Main's article, "What We Know About the Homeless" [May], is both valid and enlightening. However, I wish to take issue with his statement, that ". . . housing policies such as rent control and byzantine regulations . . . in cities like New York have undoubtedly exacerbated the situation."

If rent regulations were removed, rents would skyrocket and people would be forced to vacate their apartments in droves, thereby causing a new flow into the homeless population. The solution would be to rehabilitate the many structurally sound buildings in and around New York which could then absorb all the homeless—from which they came in the first place.

RUTH DALIN

Bronx, New York

Toscanini

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

As one who was born too late to hear Toscanini in person but who never ceases to marvel at and learn from his recorded performances, I wish to express my gratitude to William H. Youngren for his article "Bashing Toscanini" [April]. I hope that his remarks will spur new listeners to experience what is a uniquely eloquent performing style placed in the service of a fanatical devotion to music.

Mr. Youngren notes that much of Joseph Horowitz's book, *Understanding Toscanini*, is concerned with the aggressive publicity efforts mounted by NBC. As regrettable as this hype was, it would be a serious mistake to suppose that the demise of the NBC symphony marked the end of advertising hype in America. One has only to turn to a recent ad for *Understanding Toscanini* (the one I saw appeared in the *New York Review of Books*) to understand that the art of culling favorable quotations to boost sales is alive and flourishing. In addition to the assurance that the book is "extraordinarily fascinating," the ad includes Robert Craft's characteristically judicious and understated assessment that "no one concerned with the fate of the arts in our jingoist and dangerously confused society can afford to ignore Joseph Horowitz's courageous, necessary, and for the most part irrefutable cultural case history" (a mild implication being, I suppose, that those of us who can somehow manage to ignore what Horowitz and Craft have to say must be the dupes of dangerously confused jingoists). No mention in the ad, however, of Harvey Sachs's negative review (which appeared in the *New Republic*), nor do I hold out great hope that Mr. Youngren's own judgments will figure prominently in any future promotional initiative.

MICHAEL HALPERN

Glenside, Pennsylvania

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Take a great airline to a great country.

Take Lufthansa to Israel.

When you travel to Israel—or to any of the 161 cities in 82 countries we fly to—you can enjoy world-renowned Lufthansa service and dependability all the way from the U.S. to your destination. If you want fine kosher food in flight, simply tell us when you make your reservation. Ask your travel agent about us.

Lufthansa

680 Fifth Avenue,
One World Trade Center (Lobby),
New York, N.Y. Tel. (718) 895-1277

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Who Killed Poetry?

Joseph Epstein

There are certain things in which mediocrity is intolerable: poetry, music, painting, public eloquence.

—La Bruyère

I am not about to say of poetry, as Marianne Moore once did, that "I, too, dislike it," for not only has reading poetry brought me instruction and delight but I was taught to exalt it. Or, more precisely, I was taught that poetry was itself an exalted thing. No literary genre was closer to the divine than poetry; in no other craft could a writer soar as he could in a poem. When a novelist or a dramatist wrote with the flame of the highest inspiration, his work was said to be "touched by poetry"—as in the phrase "touched by God." "The right reader of a good poem," said Robert Frost, "can tell the moment it strikes him that he has taken an immortal wound—that he will never get over it." Such quasi-religious language to describe poetry was not unusual; not so long ago, it was fairly common. "The function of poetry," wrote Robert Graves, "is religious invocation of the Muse; its use is the experience of mixed exaltation and horror that her presence excites."

Both these quotations and several others in the same spirit are to be found at the back of Oscar Williams's *A Little Treasury of Modern Poetry* (revised edition), a small stout volume that has something of the look and heft of a missal or other religious tome. Even Delmore Schwartz, not a man noted for heightened rhetoric or empty ecstasy, referred to the poet as "a kind of priest." To those for whom literature, and culture generally, came increasingly to stand in as a substitute for religion, poetry—and modern poetry specifically—was High Church.

The copyright date on my edition of Oscar Williams's anthology is 1950, and it was during the 1950's that poetry last had this religious aura. Many of the high priests of the cult—T. S. Eliot and Wallace Stevens, Robert Frost and William Carlos Williams, E. E. Cummings and W. H. Auden—were still alive and still writing, even if the best of their work was already behind them. The audience for poetry was then less than vast; it had diminished greatly since the age of Browning and Tennyson. In part this was owing to the increased difficulty of poetry, of which T. S. Eliot, in 1921, had remarked: "It appears likely that poets in our civilization, as it exists, at present, must be *difficult*." Eliot's justification for this difficulty—and it has never seemed quite persuasive—is that poetry must be as complex as the civilization it describes, with the modern poet becoming "more comprehensive, more allusive, more indirect." All this served to make the modern poet more exclusive as well, which, for those of us who adored (a word chosen with care) modern poetry, was quite all right. Modern poetry, with the advance of modernism, had become an art for the happy few, and the happy few, it must be said, are rarely happier than when they are even fewer.

But such snobbish considerations aside, the generations of poets between W. B. Yeats (1865-1939) and W. H. Auden (1907-1973) produced an impressive body of poetry—of the kind that, in Frost's phrase, really does make "an immortal wound"; once read, it never is quite forgotten. Nor were all of these poets imposingly difficult: Yeats isn't, nor is Robert Frost. The most difficult poems of all, the *Cantos* of Ezra Pound, seem over the years to have slipped outside the canon of great modern poetry and to be thought instead the interesting fragments of a great cultural impresario—the Diaghilev of modernist poetry—who finally flipped, betraying both his country and himself. These poets did not, except occasionally, teach. Occupationally, they ranged from physician (William Carlos Williams) to editor (Marianne Moore) to insurance executive (Wallace Stevens); in personal style, from traditionally formal (T. S. Eliot) to bohemian (E. E. Cummings) to suicidally desperate (Hart Crane). But for all their variety, no one would ever think to describe them as academic.

They were, however, the first living poets to be given the full academic treatment. Their works were dissected in classrooms, the intellectual quarterlies ran solemn essays about them even while continuing to run their poems, book-length critical studies about them began to be written and continue to be written even now. Their fame was

Joseph Epstein is the author of *Plausible Prejudices* and *Once More Around the Block*, among other books. A new collection of his essays, *Partial Payments*, will be published by Norton early next year.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

neither of the general nor of the wealth-producing kind that Ernest Hemingway and William Faulkner knew—though T. S. Eliot was an international celebrity—but within the circumambience of the university they were revered. No body of critical writing produced during this period was more efficacious than that of T. S. Eliot, whose essays could affect the reputation—"the place in the canon," as academics now put it—of writers born three hundred years earlier. In the view of F. R. Leavis, Eliot, along with Samuel Johnson, Coleridge, and Matthew Arnold, is one of the four great English literary critics, yet without the authority lent his criticism by his poetry, it is plain that Eliot's critical power would have been nowhere near so great.

But the clearest evidence of the reverence in which these poets were held is found in the way they were worshipped by the generation of poets, or at least those in America, who followed them. Randall Jarrell, Robert Lowell, John Berryman, Delmore Schwartz not only wrote some of the most brilliant essays on their immediate poetic forebears, but in their lives they tended to be obsessed with them. The young Robert Lowell set up a tent on the lawn of the home of Allen Tate, to learn at the feet of one of his masters. Delmore Schwartz viewed T. S. Eliot as a culture hero, pure though not so simple, and his letters and conversation were filled with references to Eliot. Randall Jarrell, after writing about Wallace Stevens's latter-day weaknesses, capped his criticism with the thought that Stevens was "one of the true poets of our century, someone whom the world will keep on reading just as it keeps on listening to Vivaldi or Scarlatti, looking at Tiepolo or Poussin."

Jarrell, Lowell, Berryman, Schwartz, as anyone who has read much about them cannot mistake, were all immensely ambitious men. Had their ambitions been applied to business or politics or perhaps anything other than careers in poetry—and all four were the most careful caretakers of their careers—they might not have ended as sadly as they did: in repeated mental breakdown, alcoholism, early death, and suicide. I believe poetry was implicated in their disastrous lives in that they had set out to forge brilliant careers like those of their predecessors and knew that, for a complex of reasons, they could not make it. Jarrell wrote an essay entitled "The Obscurity of the Poet," which he claimed had to be surmounted if civilization were to carry on, and another entitled "The Taste of the Age," which he found trashy. Delmore Schwartz wrote essays on "The Isolation of Modern Poetry," "The Vocation of the Poet," "Views of a Second Violinist, Some Answers to Questions about Writing Poetry," and "The Present State of Poetry," a state that he thought, to put it gently, uninspiring. The main modernist poets had written with assurance in their bones, as if they knew their worth and knew that posterity would one day know it, too. But the poets who came after them were less sure; they knew something had gone wrong. And they were right. It had.

BEFORE I attempt to get at what I believe has happened, perhaps I ought to describe what I think is the situation of contemporary poetry. Pressed to formulate this situation in a single sentence, I should write: contemporary poetry in the United States flourishes in a vacuum. Today there are more than 250 universities with creative-writing programs, and all of these have a poetry component, which means that they not only train aspiring poets but hire men and women who have published poetry to teach them. Many of these men and women go from being students in one writing program to being teachers in another—without, you might say, their feet, metrical or anatomical, having touched the floor. Many colleges and universities that do not have formal writing programs nonetheless hire poets to teach a creative-writing course or two; and the course in writing poetry has also become a staple of the community-college and adult-education menu. None of this puts poets up there with the Helmsleys and the Trumps, but it has made it possible for a large number of poets—and more than 6,300 poets and other writers are listed in the most recent edition of the *Directory of American Poets and Fiction Writers*—to earn their living in work closely connected with their craft. Such work, thirty or so years ago, was available only to a small handful of poets, and these of the highest stature.

Robert Frost, when in his eighties and a great draw on the poetry-reading circuit, thought it a good thing that poets had become teachers "in a thousand, two thousand colleges," and added that colleges and universities gave poets "the best audiences poetry ever had in this world." Writing in 1985, in an essay entitled "The Poetry Reading: Public Performance/Private Act," the poet Donald Hall noted: "In the past thirty years, the poetry reading, which used to be rare, has become the chief form of publication for American poets. Annually, hundreds of thousands of listeners hear tens of thousands of readings." The great majority of these take place on college campuses, but many others are given at such cultural centers as the 92nd Street Y in New York, the Poetry Center at the Art Institute in Chicago, the International Poetry Forum in Pittsburgh, not to mention various churches, synagogues, bars, art galleries, bookstores, and other public forums. Donald Hall reminds us that such poets as Vachel Lindsay, Carl Sandburg, and Robert Frost were giving readings in the 20's and 30's, but it was Dylan Thomas, in the late 40's and early 50's, who by providing quite beautiful performances and the added attraction of outrageous behavior really put poetry reading on the cultural map.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Poetry readings can draw anywhere from a pathetic handful of bedraggled students to a tony audience of several hundred. The fame of the poet is decisive. Fame, too, determines fees. Donald Hall, in 1985, claimed that a standard good fee for a reading was $1,000, though most poets, I suspect, accept a good deal less, while others—Allen Ginsberg, Adrienne Rich, John Ashbery—can command more. James Dickey claimed to have received as much as $4,500 for a reading. Sometimes two or three nearby colleges will invite a poet to read at each of their institutions, and the poet will pick up two or three fees while the colleges share the cost of a single airplane ticket. Intramurally, there are arguments about whether readings are corrupting to poets. Some claim that reading too frequently can make a poet tend to compose simpler, jokier poems that can be readily understood by an audience, whereas complex poems—imagine hearing Wallace Stevens's "Le Monocle de Mon Oncle" without ever having read it—do not, so to say, play well at readings. Yet readings have helped many poets who do not have, or want, teaching jobs to keep going financially. Readings, too, are often the only payment in the coin of the realm of the ego that they ever receive, for the printed work of poets, sometimes including poets who have been at it a long while, often gets hardly any response at all in the way of reviews or even letters from readers.

No one keeps very precise records on such matters, but the general sense is that more poetry is currently being published than ever before. Poets are not being all that widely published by the major trade houses of New York and Boston, though almost all of them do publish some contemporary poets. Many university presses have begun to issue books of poetry, and some have been doing so for years. (Howard Nemerov, our new poet laureate, has been published by the University of Chicago Press for as long as I can remember.) What have come to be called the "small presses" also publish a fairly large amount of poetry. Some of these—David R. Godine of Boston, for example, or North Point Press of Berkeley—aren't as small as all that, but others, which carry such names as Dragon Gate or Aralia Press, truly are. The best general answer to the question of how well these books of poetry sell is probably "not very." It used to be said that the only serious poet in America who was ever able to live off the sale of his work was Robert Frost, but according to Donald Hall, even Frost was able to do so only at the end of his life.

Yet there is no shortage of outlets for poetry. The *New Yorker* publishes it, most of the literary monthlies and quarterlies do; *Poetry,* founded by Harriet Monroe in 1912, rolls along. And beyond such publications are the many little magazines that print vast quantities of poetry. The circulation of these magazines is often not in the thousands but in the hundreds. Almost all of them would go under without subsidization. So numerous are the little magazines that there exists an organization—an "umbrella organization," in the bureaucratic phrase—called The Coordinating Council for Literary Magazines. It, too, is heavily subsidized, in good part by the National Endowment for the Arts. Sometimes it seems as if there isn't a poem written in this nation that isn't subsidized or underwritten by a grant either from a foundation or the government or a teaching salary or a fellowship of one kind or another.

And so, as the disc jockeys say, the beat goes on. The pretense is that nothing is wrong, that business is proceeding pretty much as usual. There are today, for example, prizes galore: Pulitzers and Lamonts and National Book Critics Circle and Yale Younger Poets and Rome Fellowships of the American Academy and Institute of Arts & Letters and Guggenheims and National Endowment for the Arts Fellowships and Library of Congress Consultantships and the Lilly Prize and now a national poet laureate and even—how he, most ambitious of poets, would have wryly smiled at the news—a Delmore Schwartz Memorial Award. Poets regularly parade as spokesmen and -women for their ethnic group or race or political tendency. Some few poets—Robert Penn Warren, perhaps Richard Wilbur is soon to arrive at this position—have more medals than Baron von Richthofen.

No shortage, then, of honors, emoluments, publication possibilities, opportunities to garner public adulation. In such ways may contemporary poetry be said to be flourishing.

BUT what of the vacuum? I should say that it consists generally of this: that however much contemporary poetry may be honored, it is, outside a very small circle, scarcely read. Contemporary poetry is no longer a part of the regular intellectual diet. People of general intellectual interests who feel that they ought to read or at least know about works on modern society or recent history or novels that attempt to convey something about the way we live now, no longer feel the same compunction about contemporary poetry. The crowds in London once stood on their toes to see Tennyson pass; today a figure like Tennyson probably would not write poetry and might not even read it. Poetry has been shifted—has shifted itself?—off center stage. Literarily, poetry no longer seems in any way where the action is. It begins to seem, in fact, a sideline activity, a little as chiropractic or acupuncture is to mainstream medicine—odd, strange, but with a small cult of followers who swear by it.

One might counter that poetry was in a similar state when the modernist poets set out on their ambitious artistic adventure. They published their work in magazines read only by hundreds; their names were not known by most members of the educated classes; their following, such as it was,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

had a cultish character. But beyond this nothing else seems comparable. Propelling the modernist poets was a vision, and among some of them a program—a belief that the nature of life had changed fundamentally and that artists now had to change accordingly. Free verse, fragmented syntax, radical disjunctions, slangy diction, the use of subjects before then thought poetically impossible—these were among the techniques and methods employed by the modernist poets. New, too, was their attitude toward the reader, whom they, perhaps first among any writers in history, chose in a radical way to disregard. They weren't out to *épater*. If what they wrote was uncompromisingly difficult, they did not see this as their problem. They wrote as they wrote; as for their difficulty, the question was whether or not, in Henry James's phrase, theirs was "the difficulty that inspired." By that phrase I take James to have meant difficulty of a kind that inspires one to surmount it because one senses the reward to be eminently worthy of the struggle. Somehow, through the quality of their writing, the authority of the sacrifices they made for their art, the aura of adult seriousness conveyed in both work and life, the modernist poets won through. Theirs was the difficulty, ours the inspiration.

Whereas one tended to think of the modernist poet as an artist—even if he worked in a bank in London, or at an insurance company in Hartford, or in a physician's office in Rutherford, New Jersey—one tends to think of the contemporary poet as a professional: a poetry professional. Like a true professional, he is rather insulated within the world of his fellow-professionals. The great majority of poets today live in an atmosphere almost entirely academic, but it is academic with a difference: not the world of science and scholarship but that of the creative-writing program and the writing workshop. (Everything that has gone wrong with the world since World War II, Kingsley Amis once noted, can be summed up in the word "workshop.") The poets who have come out of this atmosphere are oddly positioned both in academic life and in the world at large; they are neither wholly academics nor wholly artists. They publish chiefly in journals sheltered by universities, they fly around the country giving readings and workshops at other colleges and universities. They live in jeans yet carry a curriculum vitae. I have seen scores of such curricula, and they tend to run along the following lines:

> James Silken [a name I have made up] published his first book of poems, *Stoned Jupiter*, with the University Presses of Florida. His second book, *The Parched Garden*, will be published early next year by Black Bear Press. A chapbook, *Apaches and Parsley*, was brought out by Wainscotting Books in 1983. His poems and reviews have appeared in such journals as *Poetry Northwest*, *New Letters*, *The Arizona Review*, *TriQuarterly*, and *Worcester Review*. He has given readings at Iowa State University, the University of Michigan, Drake University, and Bread Loaf. Next summer he will be a fellow at the Oregon Center for the Creative Arts. A native of Tennessee, he now lives in Tempe, where he directs the writing program at Arizona State University.

Well, it's a living.

In 1941 Delmore Schwartz, in an essay originally published in *Kenyon Review* and entitled "The Isolation of Modern Poetry," wrote that "It is not a simple matter of the poet lacking an audience, for that is an effect, rather than a cause, of the character of modern poetry." The character that Schwartz then had in mind was its difficulty (in the Henry James sense). In *Partisan Review*, in 1949, Schwartz added, "Anyone who wants to understand modern poetry can do so by working about half as hard as he must to learn a language, or acquire any new skill, or learn to play bridge well." But in fact, with an occasional exception (the obscurity of much of the poetry of John Ashbery comes to mind), contemporary poetry has not grown more but less difficult, and the audience still isn't there.

If Delmore Schwartz blamed the obscurity of modern poetry on its difficulty, Randall Jarrell, in a lecture at Harvard called "The Obscurity of the Poet," blamed the national culture. "The poet," said Jarrell, "lives in a world whose newspapers and magazines and books and motion pictures and radio stations and television stations have destroyed, in a great many people, even the capacity for understanding real poetry, real art of any kind." In more recent years, poets have taken this a step further to blame America for an anti-intellectual and anti-artistic strain in our national life. "Pushkin could count on railway workers to know his poems," John Berryman told Eileen Simpson, his first wife. "*Think of it*! Who reads poetry in America?" Poetry, it is elsewhere claimed, is ill-taught in grammar and high schools. The neglect of poetry by major trade publishers is sometimes blamed. Capitalism generally comes in for its share of lumps, sometimes for encouraging supermarket bookselling techniques, sometimes for holding up the wrong models: What kind of country is it in which Lee Iacocca is better known than A.R. Ammons? Everything, in short, is blamed but the drinking water.

Some poets, attempting to swallow the hand that feeds them, even blame the university, arguing that, through the emergence of so many creative-writing programs, poets have created their own, largely inbred audience that simultaneously requires a great deal in the way of care and feeding and asks little of them, the poets, in the way of literary ambition. ("Within five years," wrote Greg Kuzma, a poet and teacher of poetry, "there will be a creative-writing program available for

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

anyone in America within safe driving distance of his home.") Creative-writing programs, this argument runs, are not only producing more people who think of themselves as poets than this or any other country needs, but, through the encouraging, the somewhat therapeutic, atmosphere of the workshop, are generally lowering the high standard of work which is poetry's only serious claim on anyone's attention.

From a higher, more historical point of view, there are those who claim that the game was up for poetry with the advent of romanticism, which retained great themes for poetry but saw them through a filter of the self—whereas now, this argument holds, the great themes are gone and all that remains to poetry is a pallid subjectivity. "With the development of romantic theory in the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries," the eminent critic Yvor Winters wrote, "there has been an increasing tendency to suppress the rational in poetry and as far as it may be to isolate the emotional." A grave mistake this, at least for those who tended to view poetry as a vehicle for truth and a repository as useful as any ever invented for ideas and insights. Christopher Clausen, author of an excellent little book entitled *The Place of Poetry, Two Centuries of an Art in Crisis*, underscores this point when he writes: "Since the rise of science to intellectual preeminence, poets have been less able either to show equal claim with scientists to clarify the problems Western civilization has (perhaps wrongly) seen as most important, or to incorporate and epitomize the conclusions of their rivals."

Romanticism, science; even modernism itself has been put in the dock, for draining the joyousness out of poetry or, with the introduction of free verse, depriving poetry of the delights of meter and rhyme. Philip Larkin, for one, laid the blame for the broken connection between poets and readers on what he called "the aberration of modernism, that blighted all the arts." He meant in particular the modernist tendency to deify the artistic vocation, to separate it from any obligation on the part of a writer to instruct or entertain an audience. In a three-page essay entitled "The Pleasure Principle," Larkin wrote that "at bottom poetry, like all art, is inextricably bound up with giving pleasure, and if a poet loses his pleasure-seeking audience he has lost the only audience worth having, for which the dutiful mob that signs on every September is no substitute."

To screw things yet one notch higher, there are those who believe that the decline of poetry in our day is an inevitable accompaniment of the disintegration of language generally. Wendell Berry, a poet and essayist, writes: "My impression is that we have seen, for perhaps 150 years, a gradual increase in language that is either meaningless or destructive of meaning. And I believe that this increasing unreliability of language parallels the increasing disintegration, over the same period, of persons and communities"—and, one gathers, by extension, of the power of poetry to recover much of value from the wreckage. At a slightly lower level of generality, others believe that the use poetry has traditionally made of rhythm and meter, of image and metaphor, to bring its readers to a condition of susceptibility to the emotion and thought it wishes to convey simply no longer finds an adequate response in any but a minuscule handful of trained readers. It is as if an old human skill, like following a trail or scenting game, had atrophied and died. Still others appeal to the mysteries of history. Might we not just be going through a bad patch in the history of poetry, as the country did between, say, 1870, when Emily Dickinson and Walt Whitman were still at the height of their powers, and 1910, when the modernist poets exploded upon the scene?

No doubt romanticism, modernism, and other literary ideas and ideological movements have all had their effect in landing poetry in the position it finds itself in toward the close of the 20th century. Institutional, linguistic, historical factors have also doubtless exerted their influence in pushing poetry into the dark corner it now inhabits. Yet nearly every explanation of the situation of poetry in our time—attempting to account for its isolation, its seeming irrelevance to the general culture, the depressing sense that this once most elevated of human activities is now rather second-rate—seems to let the poets themselves off the hook. There may be something to Walt Whitman's remark that "to have great poets, there must be great audiences too," but, as Delmore Schwartz once rejoined, "To have great poetry it is necessary to have great poets. . . ."

Not that anyone has been claiming that ours is a great age of poetry. Literary forms, or genres, after all, have their own, odd, often indecipherable rises and falls. English drama never again reached the heights attained in the Elizabethan Age. Who could have predicted the great burgeoning brilliance of the novel in mid-19th-century Russia? It may well be that sixty or seventy years ago, in our Eliots and Yeatses and Stevenses and Hardys and Frosts, we had our Donnes and Marvells and are now living through our Wallaces and Lovelaces. Another view, one straightforwardly formulated by Karl Shapiro, holds that there is precious little poetic talent around even at the best of times. As Shapiro notes:

> I have for a long time come to the conclusion that at any one time the production of true works of art is even rarer than we think. I even devised a rule-of-thumb dogma which I call the B-S-K theory of poetry: Byron, Shelley, and Keats. According to this dogma, there can only be three poets at any one time. In periods of resplendent renaissance, the number increases slightly but not much, perhaps up to half a dozen. Around the points of these stars, there

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

are a certain number of satellites, and so on. Actually, this is a historically realistic way of looking at art.

But even if there were any B's or S's or K's about nowadays, it is not certain we would know who they were. Poetry is published in such plenitude that last year the Los Angeles *Times* announced it would no longer review books of poems, on the grounds that it was impossible to tell which were important. The same, by extension, applies to poets. There is nothing resembling a consensus on who might be the important poets of our day. The most lauded must be Robert Penn Warren, but one does not hear him often spoken of, or see him written about, as the kind of poet whose work is central to the lives of his readers. Richard Wilbur, the past poet laureate, is everywhere taken for eminent, and everyone for whom poetry matters reveres him for his craftsmanship, yet Wilbur does not seem to stir passionate advocacy in his readers, except when held up as a model of the literary decorum that has been lost to poetry in its confessional, sexier, Visigothic aspects. Seamus Heaney, the Irish poet who currently teaches at Harvard, is generally written about as if he were a major figure, yet his poetry, too, has failed to break out of the tight, claustral little circle of professionals. Doubtless the most famous poet in America is Allen Ginsberg, but poetry isn't really what he is famous for: politics and homosexuality and a talent for the outrageous and a small genius for publicity are the four cornerstones on which his fame rests. John Ashbery is also publicly honored and written about with critical reverence; yet, though he is not himself an academic, his poetry—about which he has said, "Poetry does not have subject matter because it is the subject. We are the subject matter of poetry, not vice versa"—is perfect for academic treatment, being allusive, desultory, and nicely self-deconstructive, which also means that it is most unlikely to hold any interest outside the academy.

Other names of equal weight are on the scene. Of the senior generation, there are Stanley Kunitz, Karl Shapiro, David Ignatow, and (in England) Stephen Spender. Of the generation of poets now in or almost in its sixties, there are Howard Nemerov, James Merrill, John Hollander, Anthony Hecht, Donald Davie, Hayden Carruth, Donald Hall, W.S. Merwin, Galway Kinnell, Richard Howard, Mona Van Duyn, Philip Levine, Maxine Kumin, Derek Walcott, Adrienne Rich, William Meredith. "When I find myself among those who don't know my name," said Virgil Thomson, "I know I'm in the real world." But the poets mentioned in this paragraph, though large names in the small world in which they operate, are again for the most part unknown outside universities or the pages of *Poetry*, *American Poetry Review*, and *Parnassus*.

I not long ago had occasion to hear two poets read and talk about their craft. Both were men, both in their thirties, both had regular teaching jobs at large universities, both had published two books and had their share of grants and awards. One of the two was a Hawaiian of Japanese ancestry, the other was middle-class Jewish. Both were zealous about poetry, which they took to be insufficiently appreciated in an essentially philistine country. The first poet viewed himself as a spokesman for his people, the truth of whose past he saw it as his task to keep alive in his own poetry. The second poet did not announce himself as a spokesman for the Jews, but he came across in the style one thinks of as tough but sensitive, the champion of a beleaguered art. His father, he disclosed, is a salesman, and it had been no easy thing to get him to understand his son's need to be a poet. (A salesman, evidently, can die deaths unknown even to Arthur Miller.) In their discussions after they read, both poets were full of quotations from Pound and Eliot and Kant and Rilke, giving off a strong whiff of the classroom.

As for the works themselves, the first read a lengthy poem about a visit to a strip of land in Hawaii that had once been the site of the cemetery where his grandfather was buried but which had since been plowed up by a developer. His was a poem, in short, about victimization, with a bit of anti-capitalism thrown in at no extra charge. The second read a poem entitled "Proustian" about the brief happy moments when, as a child, his grandmother fed him cookies and milk and he had no knowledge of time, and another poem about a visit to his former high-school football coach, who had always preached the powers of the body, but was now sadly powerless in a body racked by cancer. A poem, the New Critics held, cannot be paraphrased, but in paraphrasing—summarizing, really—these poems I do not think I am doing them a grave injustice. I bring them up only because they seemed so characteristic, so much like a great deal of contemporary poetry: slightly political, heavily preening, and not distinguished enough in language or subtlety of thought to be memorable.

Is it all up with poetry, then? As early as the 1940's, Edmund Wilson wrote an essay carrying the questioning title, "Is Verse a Dying Technique?" Wilson's answer was, essentially, yes, it is. Prose, in Wilson's view, had overwhelmed poetry. By Flaubert's time, he notes, "the Dantes present their vision in terms of prose dramas or fiction rather than epics in verse." Wilson mentions Flaubert because he is the first novelist to lavish the kind of care on his prose that poets did on their verse; James Joyce would be another. Yeats was the last great poet to write convincingly in iambic pentameters, which, Wilson noted, "no longer [have] any relation whatever to the tempo and language of our lives." Anti-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

quated forms can only render an antiquated point of view, and "you cannot deal with contemporary events in an idiom which was already growing trite in Tennyson's and Arnold's day. . . ."

Wilson does allow that our lyric poets may be compared with any who have ever written, but he adds: "We have had no imaginations of the stature of Shakespeare or Dante who have done their major work in verse." Edgar Allan Poe had anticipated much of this a century earlier. In "The Poetic Principle," his essay of 1848, Poe wrote: "If, at any time, any very long poems *were* popular in reality—which I doubt—it is at least clear that no very long poem will ever be popular again." We shall continue to read Homer, Dante, Shakespeare, Milton, perhaps Byron and Browning, to cherish and derive great pleasure from them, but with the understanding that what they did—specifically telling magnificent stories in poetic form—can never be done again.

Not that writers haven't tried. Philip Toynbee published a novel in verse in the 1960's. Clive James has written lengthy travesties of contemporary London literary life in heroic couplets. The most recent effort, a 307-page novel entitled *The Golden Gate*, composed in a Pushkinian rhyme scheme by a young writer named Vikram Seth, appeared in 1986 to much acclaim. But it was acclaim of the odd kind that Samuel Johnson felt was owed to women preachers and dogs walking on their hind legs: "You are surprised to find it done at all." So swept away were readers by the sheer freakiness of Vikram Seth's accomplishment that they overlooked its rather clichéed Berkeleyan (California not Bishop) message about making love not war.

Poets have not altogether given up on telling stories. Some of Robert Frost's best poems are narratives. Although fragmented and disjunctive, even "The Waste Land" tells a story; so, too, in a very different way, does Wallace Stevens's "Sunday Morning." In *Life Studies* (1957), Robert Lowell conveyed portions of his autobiography in verse. Among contemporary poets, Herbert Morris, in finely controlled blank verse, has written dramatic monologues and accounts of his childhood that are essentially narrative in character and quite successfully so. But for the vast most part contemporary poetry has gone off in the direction of the lyric. In practice, this means a shortish poem, usually fewer than forty lines, generally describing an incident or event or phenomenon of nature or work of art or relationship or emotion, in more or less distinguished language, the description often, though not always, yielding a slightly oblique insight.

SAMUEL JOHNSON, who said of *Paradise Lost* that "None ever wished it longer than it is," said in the same essay on Milton that "All that short compositions can commonly attain is neatness and elegance." There are various reasons why so many contemporary poems are, in Johnson's phrase, "short compositions," and not the least among them is that most magazines do not provide space for long poems. They choose not to do so on the assumption, probably correct, that few even quite serious readers wish to read a poem that runs ten or more pages. (Let us not speak of the talent that it takes to sustain an extended poetic performance.) But in taking up the lyric as its chief form, contemporary poetry has seriously delimited itself. It thereby gives away much that has always made literature an activity of primary significance; it gives away the power to tell stories, to report on how people live and have lived, to struggle for those larger truths about life the discovery of which is the final justification for reading. Thus has poetry in our day become, in the words of the intelligent young poet and critic Brad Leithauser, "a sadly peripheral art form."

Even here on the periphery, though, it would help to be able to make a few distinctions. Although it hardly guarantees the production of great poets, a start might be made by deciding who are the greatly overrated ones. This, however, is not likely to happen soon. Contemporary poetry, in the cumbersome new usage of the academic literary criticism of the moment, has been "privileged"—that is, in our day it has been given a special dispensation, set apart, released from the burden of undergoing tough criticism. Helen Vendler, the most talented critic of contemporary poetry now at work, almost exclusively writes elucidary appreciations; one can only infer which poets Professor Vendler doesn't care for by her neglecting to write about them. Randall Jarrell, the most talented critic of contemporary poetry in his day, felt no such compunction; he kissed and slapped with equal exuberance. But then poetry in Jarrell's time may not have seemed as sickly as it does now. Now, for so many poets, critics, editors, small-press publishers, creative-writing programs, the chief thing seems to be keeping the patient alive.

Yet if survival is genuinely at stake, it won't do to ignore symptoms. For an account of symptoms, of what is wrong with so much contemporary poetry, one does well to consider an extraordinary essay by Witold Gombrowicz, the Polish novelist who died in Paris in exile in 1969. The essay is entitled, straight out, "Against Poets." In his second paragraph Gombrowicz states, if not his case against contemporary poetry, his condition when reading it:

> The thesis of the following essay, that almost no one likes poems and that the world of verse is a fiction and a falsehood, will seem, I assume, as bold as it is frivolous. Yet here I stand before you and declare that I don't like poems at all and that they even bore me. Maybe you will say I am an impoverished ignoramus. Yet I have labored in art for a long time and its language

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

is not completely alien to me. Nor can you use your favorite argument against me, claiming that I do not possess a poetic sensibility, because I do possess it and to a great degree. When poetry appears to me not in poems but mixed with other, more prosaic, elements, for example, in Shakespeare's dramas, in the prose of Pascal and Dostoevsky, or simply as a very ordinary sunset, I tremble as do other mortals. Why does rhythm and rhyme put me to sleep, why does the language of poets seem to me to be the least interesting language conceivable, why is this Beauty so unattractive to me and why is it that I don't know anything worse as style, anything more ridiculous than the manner in which poets speak about themselves and their poetry?

When Gombrowicz gets down to his bill of particular complaint, it turns out that he is put off by the professionalization of poetry—"today one is a Poet, the way one is an engineer or a doctor"—which has robbed poetry of its spontaneity, made poetry itself seem artificial, and rendered the poet a less than complete human being. Poetry has been surrounded by altogether too much piety, so that poets have begun to think themselves priestly in their exclusivity. Poets tend to keep the company of other poets, which not only fortifies them in "their ostrich politics in relation to reality," but protects them from seeing their own weaknesses. Poets create chiefly for other poets—for people like themselves, which, in Gombrowicz's view, is another weakness. Here, he notes, "I am not demanding that they write 'in a way comprehensible to everyone.' " He merely wishes that they would not so insistently pose as artists and neglect the fact that beyond their enclosed private world exist other, quite as interesting worlds. He mentions the way poets honor and praise and generally suck up to one another, writing about their fellow poets in a "bombastic gibberish so naive and childish that it is difficult to believe that the people wielding the pen did not feel the ridiculousness of this publicism." But enough.

If Gombrowicz's condition seems slightly self-exacerbated, his case more than slightly exaggerated, nevertheless anyone who has followed contemporary poetry will have shared some of his irritation with it and will recognize a general truth to his charges. No world I have ever peered in upon can seem simultaneously so smug and so hopeless as that of the world of contemporary poets, especially in its creative-writing program phase. All too often contemporary poets comport themselves as if they were self-appointed to E.M. Forster's little aristocracy of the sensitive, the considerate, and the plucky. ("When what they really are," a wag I know has said, "is the insensate, the outrageous, and the lucky.") The last thing they wish to hear is that they are producing something not many people outside the classroom want; and instead they act as if those who do not appreciate what they do are, on the face of it, spiritually crippled.

But among serious poets, and people serious about poetry, there is a stabbing recognition that something has happened. It is as if poetry has lost its weight, and hence its reality, and hence its value. Speaking for myself, there have been contemporary poets I have much admired—to mention only the recently dead, Elizabeth Bishop, L.E. Sissman, Philip Larkin—but none has been able to plant language in my head the way that poets of an earlier generation could: "The salmon-falls, the mackerel-crowded seas"; "Complacencies of the peignoir, and late/Coffee and oranges in a sunny chair"; "But I have promises to keep/And miles to go before I sleep"; "In the room the women come and go/Talking of Michelangelo"; "All in green went my love riding"; "Like a patient etherised upon a table"; "a low dishonest decade"; "Something there is that doesn't love a wall"; "imaginary gardens with real toads in them."

Where did all that elegant, potent, lovely language go; or, more precisely, where went the power to create such language? Perhaps, like W. B. Yeats in Auden's poem, it "disappeared in the dead of winter."

To return to Marianne Moore, whence we set out:

> I, too, dislike it.
> Reading it, however, with a perfect contempt
> for it, one discovers in
> it, after all, a place for the genuine.

And more than the genuine, I should say, though just now the entire enterprise of poetic creation seems threatened by having been taken out of the world, chilled in the classroom, and vastly overproduced by men and women who are licensed to write it by degree if not necessarily by talent or spirit. It was Wallace Stevens who once described poetry as "a pheasant disappearing in the brush." One gets a darting glint of it every once in a while in the work of the better contemporary poets, but to pretend that that meaty and delectable bird freely walks the land isn't going to get him out of hiding, not soon, and maybe not ever.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

What the Kiss-and-Tell Books Tell

David Brock

THE hullabaloo over the recent spate of memoirs by former members of the Reagan administration has been so entirely off the mark that little is known about what these supposedly tell-all accounts actually reveal. On the one side, the President's supporters, hoping to paper over the unlovely, though so far unrefuted, contents of these books, have invoked a slew of reasons why they ought not to have been written at all: national security, government confidentiality, common decency. On the other side, the President's critics, including most of the opinion-setting elite, have plucked from each memoir a few choice lines with which to confirm their long-held prejudices about Ronald Reagan. And so the detractors have had it both ways, joining forces with Reagan's apologists in vilifying the "kiss-and-tell" authors while citing the fact that he hired and trusted such people as additional proof of his foolishness.

But certainly Martin Anderson, Terrel Bell, Michael Deaver, Donald Regan, and Larry Speakes do not constitute the first batch of former government officials to resign and turn to the typewriter in an effort to set the record straight as they see it or to settle some old scores. Nor have they established any precedent in exposing an administration still in office, or in resorting to indecorous means in doing so. If the Reagan books seem to represent the capstone of a trend toward the vulgarization of public discourse, this owes more to their almost simultaneous publication than to anything especially unique in their contents.

Indeed, while perhaps not a wholly venerable American tradition, the writing of talebearing political memoirs is a tradition nonetheless. Willian Duane, Andrew Jackson's Treasury Secretary, entered unflattering judgments about the administration in which he had served in *Narrative and Correspondence Concerning the Removal of the Deposites*, as did another Jackson aide, Robert Mayo, in *Political Sketches in Eight Years in Washington*. After leaving Abraham Lincoln's White House, John Hay, the President's personal assistant, described Mary Todd Lincoln in his memoirs as an extravagant, manipulative, "hellcat." From the reign of Franklin D. Roosevelt poured forth at least a dozen such books, including the bitterly critical *After Seven Years*, published in 1939 by New Deal braintruster Raymond Moley. From the Eisenhower administration, chief of staff Sherman Adams, Cabinet secretary Robert Gray, and speechwriter John Hughes all delivered themselves of candid assessments.

The Watergate era, of course, produced its own special genre of insider accounts, by John Dean, Jeb Stuart Magruder, John Ehrlichman, Bob Haldeman, and Charles Colson, not to mention Richard Nixon himself. And who can forget the story of the "killer rabbit" that menaced Jimmy Carter in his rowboat, as related by former aide James Fallows in his 1979 articles on "The Passionless Presidency"? Moreover, within a year or so after leaving office, most of the Carter administration's leading lights—including Zbigniew Brzezinski, Cyrus Vance, Joseph Califano, Hamilton Jordan, and Jody Powell—had published revealing glimpses of their tenure. And even in the early days of the Reagan administration, Alexander M. Haig, James Watt, and David Stockman all undertook uninhibited attempts to influence the historical record.

The inevitable "kiss-and-tell" flavor of such memoirs may make the general reader feel ill at ease, at least if he values loyalty and respects confidence. What boggles the mind, however, is that official Washington has chosen the concluding months of the Reagan administration to work itself into a lather over the divulgence of privileged information. In this decade, after all, the leadership of the Democratic party, abandoning any pretense to being a "loyal opposition" in the traditional sense, pulled back the curtain on all sorts of state secrets in a campaign to undermine the President's foreign policy. This the Democratic leadership accomplished by strategically leaking sensitive intelligence data and executive policy plans; by staging, in the Iran-*contra* hearings, a congressional inquisition in which policy-makers were compelled to bare their souls; and, as if that were not enough, by flying to foreign capitals to

DAVID BROCK writes on politics for *Insight* magazine, and has contributed to the *American Spectator*, the *Wall Street Journal*, and other publications.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

brief enemy leaders on the inner workings of the American government.

Officials of the executive branch, meanwhile, in the grip of countless unresolved policy tussles, sniped at one another in the press under the protection of anonymity, made favored reporters privy to who said what in high-level meetings, and wrote government memoranda in anticipation of finding them reprinted in the next morning's newspapers. For their part, the great moralists in the media could be counted on less and less to exercise any self-restraint whatsoever, whether on matters of American security or the private lives of public officials.

Compared with these purgations, which rendered oxymoronic the words "covert" and "confidential," the anecdotes found in the pages of the Reagan-era memoirs are quite innocent.

None of this is to say that the new memoirs are without their faults. None would meet scholarly standards of objectivity (not that they should be expected to do so). Though they vary widely in clarity, percipience, style, and scope, none has the reach of, say, Henry Kissinger's memoirs. All exhibit some measure of malice, peevishness, and frivolity.

The one that has become most notorious for the last-named qualities is *For the Record*, by former chief of staff Donald T. Regan.[1] The role played by Nancy Reagan in ousting Regan from office has been well-documented; on page one of his book, Regan retaliates by exposing the First Lady to a by-now worldwide embarrassment, contending that "virtually every major move and decision" of the Reagans was "cleared in advance with a woman in San Francisco who drew up horoscopes." But by the conclusion of the book, Regan has failed to persuade the reader on the evidence that Mrs. Reagan's involvement with astrology represents anything more serious than a wife's fears about her husband's safety and well-being. In the end, the astrology story seems nothing more than a gratuitous—if thoroughly successful—attempt to grab headlines.

So it is, too, with the mean-minded name-calling in *Speaking Out*, by former White House spokesman Larry Speakes,[2] who seems to have cared for no one in the Reagan retinue—not George Bush ("wishy-washy"), not Caspar Weinberger ("a small whiny type guy"), not Patrick Buchanan ("a blind reactionary"), not even the President's daughter Maureen ("to the Right of Attila the Hun"). The insults are hurled so fast and with so little discrimination that they leave virtually no impression. Similarly, in *The Thirteenth Man*, by the former Secretary of Education Terrel Bell,[3] an attempt to imbue with drama a series of bureaucratic battles with the "Extreme Right"—a "secret society" that "proclaimed its ideological identity on cufflinks and neckties"—has the reverse effect of deflating rather than aggrandizing the supposed threat. Alone of this crew, Michael K. Deaver, the former deputy chief of staff, resists the publicity-mongering impulse, perhaps because he served the Reagans for so long; his only revelations in *Behind the Scenes*[4] are that Reagan does not dye his hair, take naps, or read the Wizard of Id comic strip.

Finally, there is Martin Anderson, the former domestic-policy adviser, who has not written in the chatty vein of his old colleagues and may well be chagrined to find himself in their company now. Unlike the others, he is a distinguished intellectual and a veteran policy adviser to Reagan. Much of his book, *Revolution*,[5] is an analysis of how conservative public-policy positions have developed and fared since the days of Barry Goldwater.

Nevertheless, *Revolution* quickly became known as the "juiciest account of all" (as one newswire put it), mainly for Anderson's intriguing but unconvincing narrative of the unfolding of the Iran-*contra* affair, in which he alleges that the brain tumor which killed former CIA director William Casey had affected his thinking for years, making him obsessive, suspicious, and reckless. This, we are led to believe, is why Casey engineered the firing of half of the members of the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board (including Anderson himself) in November 1985 and later championed the notion of selling arms to the Ayatollah. In keeping with this thesis, Anderson resurrects a sketchy story about Oliver North's alleged psychological troubles upon his return from Vietnam and then concludes that the "crazed" duo of Casey and North almost undid the "Reagan revolution" from within.

Interestingly enough, Anderson confides in a prologue that this section of his book—a book which is otherwise devoted to federal fiscal policy—arose out of a suggestion made to him by his editor, who sagely predicted that it would garner no small amount of attention. Here we find the nub of a malady endemic in political memoirs: joined to the author's financial designs, desire for ego satisfaction, and thirst for revenge is the publisher's concern for profit and publicity. Something of a precedent in this regard was set by David Stockman's *The Triumph of Politics: How the Reagan Revolution Failed*. For agreeing to empty his mind of every nasty observation and self-doubt he had ever entertained, the former budget director received a reported $2.4 million advance (in the event, his publisher is thought to have lost money on the deal). By contrast, Sheila Tate, Nancy

[1] Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 379 pp., $21.95.
[2] With Robert Pack. Scribner's, 322 pp., $19.95.
[3] Free Press, 208 pp., $19.95.
[4] With Mickey Herskowitz. Morrow, 272 pp., $17.95.
[5] Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 512 pp., $19.95.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Reagan's former press secretary, has said recently that upon leaving the White House she was besieged with six-figure book offers which evaporated when she balked at the notion of trading in gossip; former White House aide Edward Rollins has told a similar tale.

The titillating amenities, then, serve a purpose—but they often end up eclipsing entirely the book in which they appear. That, no doubt, is why anyone who reads these memoirs, not stopping merely at their sensationalized excerpts, is likely to be startled by how little they correspond to the reports swirling about their publication. In the main, and for all their faults, these books are not shallow, self-serving exercises, nor are they backbiting anti-Reagan diatribes. They are, rather, sober and serious, presenting an illuminating, if at times bizarre and disturbing, account of the Reagan years. Taken together, in fact, they display a powerful uniformity of both theme and detail, indicating that the story they tell is very close to the truth—the primary standard by which in any case they should be judged.

FROM press notices, one would think these books have little, if anything, good to say about Reagan or his administration. This is far from being so. Each of the authors duly compliments Reagan on his signal achievements and points out those personal qualities which enabled him to succeed when and as he did. The books go a long way toward explaining the much-vaunted—in the days before the Iran scandal, anyway—"Reagan magic" and the "teflon presidency." Deaver is particularly perceptive here, recounting how and why the speech Reagan delivered to the 1964 Republican convention so moved the crowd and set his career on a path to the White House. "He praised the nominee little, nor did he savage LBJ at all. He made a positive case for conservatism," Deaver writes.

Another factor favoring Reagan, Deaver observes, was "his ability to head the government without being thought of as a politician." And Anderson, who traveled extensively with candidate Reagan in the 1976 and 1980 presidential campaigns, observes:

> Reagan's ability to speak, to inspire, and move those who watched and listened to him was critical to his success as a political figure. From afar it appeared almost effortless. It was almost as if he had some special gift that enabled him to talk to his audience clearly and simply about complex policy issues in a way that personally touched them.

Contrary to the received wisdom, however, Anderson says that the famous Reagan effect was achieved by "intense, long hours of work and ingenuity." Throughout both campaigns, it turns out, Reagan's 3″ x 5″ cards contained the full text of his speeches, all of which he wrote himself.

From Donald Regan we get an even closer look:

> Reagan's heart was easily touched. A newspaper story about an afflicted child often stimulated him to send a check or write a letter, or both. His emotions were engaged by the fact that some people wrote to him as President and poured out their hearts as if he were a father of last resort. Reagan placed a high value on the good will and approval of the common people.

All in all, what emerges from these and other passages is a warm, secure, committed, confident man.

Reagan's management style has been the subject of a flurry of commentary since its flaws were first aired in the reports of the Iran-*contra* investigations, leaving the impression that he did not know or care what his own administration was doing. Donald Regan reinforces this impression when he says that never during his four years as Secretary of the Treasury did he meet privately with the President or receive a direct instruction from him. But Reagan's other former aides draw a very different picture. "He often made decisions on budget and other matters that I did not like, some of which made me angry," Bell writes. "But I never felt that his policies were aimless or wandering or lacked clear focus. He worked us hard so he could do his job and still be relaxed. That is the mark of a skillful executive." In another example, Speakes recalls an Oval Office meeting in the early days of the administration in which chief of staff James Baker and counselor Edwin Meese were wrangling over whether or not Reagan should endorse a tax increase. Suddenly, Reagan "grabbed one of the pens on his desk with such force that the base of the stand flew across the room and he wrote 'No Tax Increase' across a piece of paper."

Surely Reagan is less enamored of detail than such predecessors as Johnson, Nixon, and Carter, but according to Anderson, "over the years Reagan made all the key decisions on the economic strategy he finally embraced. He was in command all the way." Reagan gave the directive—"rebuild America's economic strength," as Anderson puts it—and his staff adopted a plan, one which had been developed by a coterie of intellectuals for years before Reagan took office. Some of these policy intellectuals now joined the administration; their efforts, directed at supply-side cuts in marginal tax rates, spending controls, deregulation, privatization, and so on, were reinforced by others on the Reagan staff, notably Regan, Baker, and Deaver. Even if the latter evinced no special commitment to this set of ideas, they still worked tirelessly to win support for them in Congress. The result, says Regan, was "an atmosphere of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

confidence and political dynamism that produced the longest economic recovery and the highest levels of employment in the history of the United States."

In the way of democracies, this was very much a "revolution" from the political center; more radical plans of program elimination and reform went nowhere. But in the words of Anderson: "What Reagan and his comrades have done is to shape America's policy agenda well into the 21st century. The prospects are nil for sharply progressive tax rates and big, new social-welfare programs."

So much was this the case that by 1988 no political candidate of any stripe (with the notable exception of Jesse Jackson) would dare utter support for tax hikes or new domestic-spending programs. Furthermore, throughout the political culture the themes of economic growth, fiscal responsibility, and private-sector initiative had acquired an unmistakable cachet. To be sure, the cronies of former House Speaker Tip O'Neill were still around, but their enthusiasm for the public trough had come to be considered retrograde even by an increasing number of their colleagues in the Democratic party.

This sweeping ideological and political change had been a long time a-building. The goals of bringing down inflation, government spending, and taxes had already won broad public support in the waning years of the Carter administration, and in that sense the candidacy and election of Reagan represented the coalescence, not the source, of sentiments already lodged in the electorate at large. This, indeed, was one reason that public opinion was in general a matter of such supreme significance to the people who ran the Reagan White House. The Reagan team, who came to be known as "image-makers" and "spin doctors," were concerned less with shaping public opinion than with reflecting and reacting to it.

IN ECONOMIC POLICY, because so much public support was already there, such an approach could do little harm. But it was another matter when the policy was decidedly unfashionable, when it involved educating and persuading—when, in short, presidential leadership was required.

Take, for example, the idea of confronting the reach of the Soviet empire in Central America by aiding the forces resisting the Sandinista dictatorship. For this idea to flourish required countering the steady drift toward appeasement in the political culture, confuting the isolationist sentiments of the public at large, overcoming the traditionally timid foreign-policy bureaucracy, and making politically costly an anti-anti-Communist or even pro-Communist vote in the Congress.

Yet here is how the denizens of the White House saw the situation: "It is not easy," Deaver writes, "for the average voter to see why Nicaragua, the Sandinistas, represent a threat to us. . . . I am personally convinced that they do," he continues, yet "I worked for four and one-half years to keep the right-wingers from getting out front on this Central American issue."

Similarly Speakes: "The majority of the American people are not concerned about Central America and don't want to see us get involved down there. The American public is wrong, but it is a losing proposition from a public-relations standpoint." Of course, public-opinion polls have varied widely on this issue, depending upon how the question has been framed. But the White House seemed uninterested in framing the question at all.

And so it went with much of the Reagan foreign-policy agenda. Indeed, almost to a one, the same factors that explain the Reagan victories in economic affairs explain in reverse the Reagan failures in foreign affairs. Midway through Reagan's campaign for the presidency in 1980, Anderson notes, "There was no full-time member of the campaign staff who was an acknowledged expert in foreign affairs or defense." After the election, "All the members of Reagan's economic policy-making team had to agree completely with the main elements of the comprehensive economic program he had set forth in the campaign. . . . Curiously, what was done to implement policy on the domestic side was not done on the foreign-policy side."

The post of Secretary of State went to Alexander M. Haig, a product of the Nixon-Kissinger school of détente of which Reagan had always been so critical. Caspar Weinberger was appointed Secretary of Defense even though he had served on the Reagan transition team for economic policy, as had the economist George Shultz, who was later to replace Haig at State. Reagan would ultimately have seven undistinguished National Security Advisers in as many years, most of whom he had no hand in choosing. Conspicuously absent from the top echelon of the foreign-policy team was a geostrategic thinker in the mold of Kissinger or Zbigniew Brzezinski; the one who qualified in this respect, Jeane Kirkpatrick, was assigned to the U.S. Mission at the United Nations and was subsequently overlooked for promotion to a policy-making job.

Under a President who had specific intentions concerning the conduct of foreign affairs, all this would have mattered much less than it clearly did under a President who, in Donald Regan's words, gave "extraordinary latitude to his staff." In this system, a staff chosen for reasons other than its cohesive views was bound to settle into gridlock. And so it did. As Speakes describes it:

> None of the first four NSC directors under Reagan had a forceful personality or the stature

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to help Reagan conduct foreign policy properly. At the same time, strong-willed Cabinet officers like George Shultz and Caspar Weinberger were constantly at odds over foreign policy, leaving the Reagan administration in a quagmire of feudal bickering over such issues as arms control, U.S.-Soviet relations, the Middle East, Central America. You name it, Shultz and Weinberger would debate it—often in a debilitating public controversy that sent alarming signals of disarray to friend and foe abroad.

When Reagan did set forth a distinct goal—beefing up military forces, developing the Strategic Defense Initiative—some uniform progress was made, but even then only by dint of efforts by committed officials like Weinberger in his unyielding pursuit of increases in defense spending. (His successor, Frank Carlucci, however, began slashing the Pentagon budget immediately upon entering office.) Anderson, the domestic-policy adviser, tells an interesting story of how on several occasions *he* saved SDI from its opponents in the administration's foreign-policy apparatus. According to Anderson, the initial announcement of SDI was kept secret by Reagan aides even from Shultz and Weinberger, for fear they would try to kill it.

Reagan set forth another goal, the advancement of democracy in the Third World, in a series of speeches beginning with one to the British Parliament in 1982. Among lower-level Reagan administration strategists, and in the wider foreign-policy world, this goal came to be known as the Reagan Doctrine, promising support for indigenous anti-Communist insurgents fighting Soviet proxy states and the promotion of liberal reforms among authoritarian allies. But Reagan and his top aides never explicitly endorsed the doctrine; absent the consistency such an endorsement would have conferred, different members of the administration were compelled to fight out the issues involved among themselves.

THE fundamental problem, in the view of these authors, was that at bottom Reagan felt uncomfortable handling foreign-policy questions. He had won the presidency on a foreign-policy platform much vaguer than his economic one; it responded to the public's general sense of frustration and fear over the hostage situation in Iran and the march of Soviet totalitarianism in Afghanistan and through Africa and Central America, but it was short on particulars. On the whole, it is safe to say that Reagan had little feel for the implementation of the policies he favored. While his support for the Nicaraguan resistance was unwavering, for example, he did not know in practical terms how to advance their cause.

In general, therefore, as Anderson writes, "When an issue involved foreign policy or a related defense or intelligence area, he made decisions more tentatively and listened to the experts." Sometimes Reagan listened to whoever happened to be standing in the room at the time, expert or not. Thus, during Israel's 1982 siege of Beirut, Deaver walked into the Oval Office and announced that he would resign unless Reagan called Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin and told him to stop the bombing. "The President looked stunned," Deaver recalls; "he immediately called Mr. Begin and told him the bombing must end. Twenty minutes later, the Israeli leader called back and said he had ordered a halt."

Decisions made hurriedly, with little understanding of their significance, were not exceptional. Even the foreign-policy successes of the Reagan years—the liberation of Grenada, the capture of the *Achille Lauro*, the bombing of Libya, the ouster of Ferdinand Marcos from the Philippines—amounted to little more than a series of sound reactions. But there were other reactions that were unsound, and some were downright dangerous. Speakes paints a hair-raising picture of the Reykjavik summit:

> Our lack of preparation backfired on us during the final day. The two leaders, sitting in a room overlooking the Bay of Reykjavik, came to the crucial issue of whether each would do away with all nuclear weapons. Reagan said he would. It was potentially a tremendous blunder that could have put the U.S. at a disadvantage against the Soviets' overwhelming conventional forces. Yet Reagan said "Yes" and Shultz sat next to him in silence. . . . Shultz also permitted Reagan and Gorbachev to wander into topics that the President wasn't expecting to discuss. Reagan even asked Shultz at one point during the summit why Shultz, who had established the ground rules with the Russians, was allowing them to go into full-scale negotiations when the President had anticipated only preliminary talks in Iceland that he hoped would lead to further discussion. . . . Things were moving so quickly it was difficult to grasp what we were doing.

FOR years, Reagan's supporters, and even some of his opponents, have tended to place the responsibility for his shortcomings on anyone or anything but Reagan himself. At the time of the Reykjavik summit, the President's more conservative supporters were concerned about his performance, but their ire was aimed at Reagan's aides, who were said to be hurrying to disarm. This was but one example of the "Let Reagan be Reagan" mantra invoked by these supporters whenever they had to rationalize actions of which they disapproved. Another example comes in the books by Regan and Anderson, in which the collapse of the administration's foreign policy is blamed almost entirely on

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the poor staff advice that the authors think led to the Iran-*contra* affair. Conveniently overlooked in this analysis is the question: what exactly is Reagan's world view and how has he gone about realizing it?

The new memoirs are quite helpful in the attempt to answer that question, though the authors do not always seem to recognize the import of their own words. Thus, Donald Regan, who stage-managed three U.S.-Soviet summits in two years, correctly notes of the so-called "zero option" that it was "feared by some geopolitical thinkers as a formula for giving the Soviets, with their overwhelming numerical superiority in conventional forces, a tactical and strategic advantage in Europe." But, Regan adds, "the President thought in more spacious terms. He liked Shevardnadze's proposal immediately because of its symbolism: it called for the total elimination of a world class of nuclear weapons from at least one region of the world." And at another point, Regan writes:

> Reagan's every action in foreign policy . . . has been carried out with the idea of one day sitting down at the negotiating table with the leader of the USSR and banning weapons of mass destruction from the planet. Few diplomats believed that such a dramatic breakthrough was possible. But Reagan, who believed the large questions were easier to resolve than small ones, and that the big answer usually contained all the smaller answers within it, probably never doubted it. I would not say that Reagan knew exactly what he was doing on the conscious level as he worked toward this goal, but I believe that he always had the big answer in mind.

Although he has often said the opposite in his speeches, Reagan has evidently long believed that it is the "arms race" itself rather than Soviet behavior that is the source of U.S.-Soviet tensions. In this connection, Speakes recalls the words of Reagan to his aides at the 1985 Geneva summit:

> If we could erase these things [i.e., nuclear weapons] that have made us so suspicious of each other it would be very worthwhile. I think I'm some judge of acting, and I don't think Gorbachev was acting. He, I believe, is sincere, as we are, in wanting an agreement. But he feels we have no right to lecture him about human rights in the Soviet Union; he sincerely believes that human rights are being violated in our own country as well.

Anderson reaches back further still, to the speech Reagan delivered at the 1976 Republican convention after losing the nomination to Gerald Ford. If one did not know otherwise, one might imagine a "peace activist" was speaking and not Ronald Reagan: "We live in a world in which the great powers have poised and aimed at each other horrible missiles of destruction that can, in a matter of minutes, arrive in each others' country and destroy virtually the civilized world we live in." Anderson points out that Reagan went beyond the nuclear-freeze proposal then advocated by the Soviet bloc and much of the European and American Left with a "quite radical" notion of reducing stockpiles of nuclear weapons. And when he became President, Anderson adds, "Reagan's preoccupation with the threat of nuclear war, so evident in his emotional address that night, did not go away." As for the reaction of Reagan's aides to his talking "of a dream he had when someday we might live in a world free of all nuclear missiles, well, we just smiled."

A final, generally overlooked hallmark of Reagan's policy-making is that, contrary to the stereotype, it has always been nonideological, based on the idea that political differences can be worked out through compromise. Speakes:

> The President was a master of timing when it came to compromising. He often said that some of the ultraconservatives would rather have him jump off a cliff with a flag in each hand. He said he believed it better to get half a loaf today and come back and get the rest tomorrow or next year.

And Regan, describing Reagan's thoughts concerning superpower relations, notes:

> Despite the conflict between the two systems [Reagan believed], no question was so complicated that it could not be reduced to its basic elements and resolved by personal agreement between two men of good will who had the power to act in the names of the U.S. and the Soviet Union.

The ability to compromise is of course an admirable trait in any leader, particularly in a democracy, but one cannot help coming away from these books wondering whether Reagan fully comprehended the vast differences between negotiating with the U.S. Congress over the budget of the federal government and negotiating with Gorbachev over the security of the West.

ANDERSON thinks that America under Reagan has experienced a "revolution" in both economic and foreign policy, but on the evidence one must conclude that in foreign policy no such revolution has occurred. In practical terms, the Reagan foreign policy amounted to maintaining the status quo: the Soviets gobbled up no new countries, and one (Grenada) was even liberated. By the conclusion of this year's Moscow summit, we seem to have returned to the détente of the 1970's—a path, it should be noted, that for all his cold-war rhetoric, Reagan had been implicitly following all along. But in the end it is clear that Reagan's foreign policy has been thoroughly his own.

Détente was first promoted by the Nixon administration in the name of realism. What was unconventional about Reagan's approach to di-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

plomacy was his idealism, combined with his unstinting belief in the virtues of American democracy. This was also the basis of his reputation as a fire-breathing hard-liner, which was earned on the strength of his rhetoric, at least some of his rhetoric some of the time, and by the naked fact that in the late 1970's he had been one of the few national politicians expressing concern about Soviet aggression and deceit.

Sadly, for all the reasons we now know, this healthy nationalism, which resonated loudly with the American public, was complemented by precious little in the way of policies aimed at making the world safer for American interests and values. Rather, Reagan's idealism, untempered either by any strategic thinking of his own or by a resolute and talented staff, came home to roost in a sentimental concern for American hostages that led to the Iran-*contra* affair; in a trust in compromise that sealed the trade of a Soviet spy, Gennadiy Zakharov, for the imprisoned American journalist Nicholas Daniloff; in a propensity to bend to opinion polls that surrendered Central American policy to the dictates of Congress; in a wistful optimism that issued at recent summits in disgraceful apologias for the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and for Soviet emigration policy; and in an almost messianic fervor to end the "arms race" that placed arms control and summitry for their own sake at the center of the American agenda.

Martin Anderson asserts, rightly, that our final judgment of any presidency must rest on its performance in foreign policy, since in the absence of a successful foreign policy there ultimately will be no economy to speak of. In this matter—can can anyone believe otherwise?—Ronald Reagan has not only proved unequal to the challenge, but he has also left a legacy of détente that may turn out to be more dangerous than its precursor of the 1970's.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Communism, Anti-Semitism & the Jews

Jerry Z. Muller

JEWS and Communism: in the 1980's, this is a pairing with diminishing resonance, yet one that does continue to quicken images, however disparate, in the collective memory. Two decades ago, New Leftists in search of exemplars set about reviving the reputations of some who had embraced the revolutionary Communist ideal before it became saddled with the odium of post-revolutionary Communist reality. In doing so they turned primarily to intellectuals who had participated in the great wave of revolutions in Central and Eastern Europe in the years from 1917 to 1919—not a few of them Jews.

Rosa Luxemburg, Leon Trotsky, and even more exotic revolutionaries such as the Hungarian Leninist aesthetician Georg Lukács were accorded a place of honor in the pantheon of the New Left. The involvement of some American Jews with the Communist party was reinterpreted, in the idiom of the 60's, as "a powerful human experience." "It was the party," Vivian Gornick wrote in *The Romance of American Communism*, "that brought to astonishing life the kind of comradeship that makes swell in men and women the deepest sense of their own humanness, allowing them to love themselves through the act of loving each other."

Few American Jews today would subscribe to so benign a view of the Communist movement. The handful who give much thought to the issue are more likely to regard the involvement of Jews with American Communism as a minor detour from the highway of integration into American democracy: a dead end perhaps, but in any case not an avenue of great consequence in the history of the United States or of American Jewry. And indeed it was not, for the party never came to power in the United States, not in a single state, not even in a single city. The image of the Jew in the mind of America was never that of a "Judeo-Bolshevik," even during the espionage trial of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, when the Communist movement tried to play upon Jewish fears by portraying anti-Communism as a form of anti-Semitism. In the collective memory of American Jewry, the entanglement of Jews and Communism merits hardly a footnote.

In Eastern and Central Europe, by contrast, the link between Jews and Communism loomed large for much of the 20th century. There Jewish experience was played out against a background of deeply ingrained anti-Semitic sentiment. In the Russian empire and in Rumania, that sentiment was expressed on the official level by the denial of citizenship rights, by restrictions on residency, and by limited access to educational institutions, and on the popular level by pogroms. In the relatively more liberal empires of Germany and Austria-Hungary, anti-Semitism was more subtle and less onerous. But in both Eastern and Central Europe the nature of anti-Semitism—its intensity, focus, and vigor—was soon to be influenced and sometimes transformed by Jewish revolutionaries, whose actions would be interpreted through a filter of existing anti-Semitic prejudice and taken as representative of Jewry as a whole.

The myth of the Jew as Bolshevik emerged from the wave of revolutions at the close of World War I. The notion became central to the Nazi program of ideological anti-Semitism, and helped inspire the collaboration of non-Germans throughout Eastern Europe in that program's murderous execution during World War II. After the war, the dialectic of anti-Semitism and Jewish involvement in Communism continued to influence the history of Eastern Europe, as the conspicuous role played by men and women of Jewish origin in the Sovietization of Eastern Europe once again transformed anti-Semitism, this time into an adjunct of popular opposition to Stalinism. And then, in a final twist, the Soviets and the Communists of Eastern Europe endeavored to use this new anti-Semitism for their own ends.

The pernicious interaction of right-wing anti-Semitism and Jewish support for revolutionary Communism has not gone unnoticed, but few have appreciated its significance for the history of modern Europe. My purpose here is to sketch the contours of the tale, focusing not, as most scholars have done, on questions of motivation,

JERRY Z. MULLER teaches modern European history at the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C. and is the author of *The Other God That Failed: Hans Freyer and the Deradicalization of German Conservatism* (Princeton University Press). Mr. Muller wishes to thank Ferenc Katona for his assistance in research on this article.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

but on consequences, intended and unintended.

Any such exploration faces the dilemma of defining who is to be considered a Jew. Is the historian to include those (such as Karl Marx, converted by his apostate parents to Lutheranism at the age of four) who deliberately and explicitly dissociated themselves from Judaism and Jewry? To regard such people as Jewish might appear to accept the racist categories imposed upon Jews by their enemies. Were one to accept solely the definitions of anti-Semites, one might end up counting even those with no historical link to Jewry, such as Joseph Stalin, whose real surname of Dzhugashvili, according to an expatriate Ukrainian anti-Semite, is Georgian for "son of a Jew." In considering the historical relationship of Jews, Communism, and anti-Semitism, it would seem most useful to regard as Jews those who were so regarded by others and who were actually of Jewish origin.

II

AN ARTICLE in the London *Illustrated Sunday Herald* from February 1920, entitled "Zionism versus Bolshevism—A Struggle for the Soul of the Jewish People," describes Bolshevism as "the schemes of International Jews. . . . Now at last this band of extraordinary personalities from the underworld of the great cities of Europe and America have gripped the Russian people by the hair of their heads, and have become practically the undisputed masters of that enormous empire."

The author of this article, Winston Churchill, was expressing a view shared by many opponents of Bolshevism in Russia and abroad, to whom the prominence of men of Jewish origin in the Bolshevik leadership was unmistakable. Leon Trotsky, commissar for foreign affairs in Lenin's first cabinet, had organized the coup within the Petrograd Soviet in 1917 which set off the October Revolution and overthrew the liberal government of Alexander Kerensky. Other prominent Bolsheviks of Jewish origin included the president of the Supreme Soviet, Yakov Sverdlov; the deputy chairman of the Council of Peoples' Commissars and chairman of the Moscow Soviet, Lev Kamenev (born Rosenfeld); the president of the Petrograd Soviet and leader of the Communist International, Grigori Zinoviev (born Radomyslski); the head of the Petrograd Cheka (secret police), Moisei Uritsky; and Karl Radek (born Sobelsohn), who was a leading figure in the Russian and German Communist parties.

With so many Bolsheviks of Jewish origin in positions of leadership, it was easy to consider Bolshevism a "Jewish" phenomenon. And if Winston Churchill, who was personally remote from anti-Semitism, could regard Bolshevism as a disease of the Jewish body politic, those who had long conceived of Jews as the enemies of Christian civilization quickly concluded that Bolshevism was little more than a transmutation of the essence of the Jewish soul.

By almost any logic, however, the identification of Bolshevism with the Jews was mistaken. To be sure, most Russian Jews welcomed the fall of the czarist regime, which had abetted anti-Semitism, confined most Jews to the "Pale of Settlement," and radically restricted their access to higher education. Within living memory, the czarist government had expelled the Jews from Moscow (1891); tolerated and even encouraged pogroms against hundreds of Jewish settlements in the wake of the revolutions of 1905; tried and convicted Mendel Beilis in 1911 on the charge of murdering a Gentile boy to use his blood for Jewish ritual purposes; and, after blaming the defeats of the Russian army in 1914 on the Jews, deported hundreds of thousands of them to inner Russia.

But after the revolution of February 1917, Jewish legal disabilities were ended by the Kerensky government. Moreover, governmental anti-Semitism, despite its severity, had not driven most Jews to the radical Left. In czarist Russia, most politically active Jews were not socialists. In the first Russian Duma of 1906, there were twelve Jews, nine of whom were associated with the liberal Constitutional Democrats. Of those who were socialists, most identified with the Yiddishist Bund, a smaller number with the Zionist Poalei Zion, a smaller number yet with the Mensheviks, and the tiniest minority with the Bolsheviks.

The reason most Russian Jews did not support Bolshevism in 1917 was that its atheism contradicted Jewish religious belief, and its economic policy threatened the many Jewish merchants, traders, and shopkeepers. In 1918 the rabbis of Odessa anathematized the Jewish Bolsheviks. The chief rabbi of Moscow told Trotsky (born Bronstein), "The Trotskys make the revolutions, and the Bronsteins pay the bills." This was a theme voiced time and again as the official Jewish community beheld with apprehension the prominence of Jews in the revolutionary wave.

Only once the civil war was under way did Jews begin to swing toward the Bolsheviks, and then not out of intrinsic attraction to the Reds but rather out of an instinct of self-preservation against the massive pogroms which accompanied the fighting. In 1919, the Red Army, with Trotsky at its head, moved into the Ukraine; the Ukrainian nationalist commander Hryhoriiv, in his appeal for help against the Bolsheviks, claimed that "the people who crucified Christ rule the Ukraine," while other partisan bands adopted the slogan "Death to Jews! For the Orthodox faith!"

In fact, in the confused circumstances in Byelorussia and the Ukraine, murderous attacks on Jews were a matter less of high policy than of popular peasant sentiment. The directory of the Ukrainian National Republic and the White lead-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

er Denikin tried in vain to control local commanders for whom the breakdown of order afforded an opportunity to plunder and murder. As the battle turned, some of these commanders switched sides, and continued their pogroms under Bolshevik auspices. Some 70,000 Jews were murdered in the Ukraine, and another 50,000 by the Whites of Denikin's Russian Volunteer Army. The effect was to drive Jews into the arms of the Reds; they had concluded that for better or worse, their very lives now depended on the defeat of the counter-revolution.

In the years following, the pattern of Jewish engagement with Bolshevism became dangerously skewed. Jews were somewhat overrepresented in the Bolshevik party, as were other ethnic groups which had suffered from discrimination. But since Jews were more highly urbanized and more highly educated than the other groups, they were more likely to be activists, and once within the party were more likely to rise. From 1917 to 1922, between one-sixth and one-fifth of the delegates to the Bolshevik party congresses were of Jewish origin. In the 1920's Jews comprised about 5 percent of the membership of the Communist party of the USSR, or about twice their proportion in the population.

Since most of the prerevolutionary civil service and intelligentsia refused to collaborate with the Bolsheviks or remained suspect in Bolshevik eyes, educated Jews moved into important and especially sensitive positions in the bureaucracy and administration of the new regime. As a result, for many Russians, their first encounter with the new regime was likely to be with a commissar, tax officer, or secret-police official of Jewish origin. To these people, the sociology of the Communist movement was a matter of little interest. Their anti-Semitism confirmed, they now conflated the Jew-as-commissar with their age-old image of the Jew-as-deicide.

III

In Central Europe, and especially in Germany, the story differed somewhat. By 1918, most German Jews had already moved into the middle and even upper classes, and so there was no goad of poverty driving them toward socialism. On the contrary, in their voting and in their political activism, German Jews, largely reflecting their social and economic status as members of the middle class, identified as far to the Right as the political spectrum allowed. That, however, was not very far. As in most of Europe, the doors to the political Right were slammed in Jewish faces by parties which regarded Christianity as integral to national identity. (In Italy, where the Right was least prone to anti-Semitism, bourgeois Jews joined the Fascist party and some rose to positions of prominence.)

And so most German Jews voted for the liberals in the decades before World War I. On the other hand, most German Jewish political *activists* were to be found in the ranks of the socialists. Some of them were led to the socialist camp by their quest for greater political and social equality. For while German Jews had already been guaranteed their civil and political rights, as they moved up the social and educational ladder they often found their path to governmental posts blocked and their opportunities for academic advance limited not by law but by prejudice. But other Jews were drawn to a more apocalyptic conception of socialist revolution.

The high culture of the educated classes of Western and Central Europe in the decade before 1914 was marked by a disaffection from liberal, bourgeois "society" and a search for new sources of "community." In time, this disaffection would lead many young intellectuals to the radical Right, to a new nationalism which promised a sense of collective purpose based on a purportedly shared past. For those Jewish intellectuals steeped in the anti-liberal ethos but by definition excluded from movements seeking a return to Germanic roots, the alternatives were a turn to Zionism (which only a few embraced before 1918) or toward a visionary socialism which promised to replace the supposedly atomizing civilization of liberal capitalism with a new culture of shared purpose that would unite all men regardless of origin.

With the collapse of the German monarchy in November 1918, Jews moved into positions of government responsibility and saliency for the first time. Like their non-Jewish counterparts, most Jewish socialists in Germany welcomed the breakthrough to full parliamentary democracy produced by the mass demonstrations of the working class at the close of the war. Real power was temporarily shared between a provisional government made up of parliamentary representatives of the socialist and liberal parties on the one hand and the councils of workers and soldiers on the other. The Left thus confronted a political choice. The Social Democrats favored parliamentary sovereignty, to be decided by democratic elections among the entire populace. To their Left were the Spartacists, who formed the new Communist party, devoted to the sovereignty of the councils (the German equivalent of the soviets). Between them were the Independent Socialists, who vacillated on the question of parliamentary versus council control.

In the fateful months after 1918, the parliamentary democratic aspirations of the Social Democrats were challenged by a series of revolutions in Berlin and Munich. Ultimately the Social Democratic leaders chose to call upon elements of the old imperial army and the newly formed Free Corps to combat the threat from the radical Left. The decision was ominous, for young veterans of the counterrevolutionary corps later became the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

backbone of National Socialism. That the leaders of the suppressed revolutions were so often Jews was a crucial factor in the recrudescence of political anti-Semitism in Germany.

IV

THE involvement of Jews in the new Communist party of Germany displayed the same inverted pyramid pattern found elsewhere. Among the Jewish population as a whole, support for the Communists was insignificant. Jews were somewhat overrepresented, however, among party activists, comprising about 7 percent of the participants at the party's founding convention. As for the eleven-person central committee, it included four Communists of Jewish origin: Rosa Luxemburg, Leo Jogiches, Paul Levi, and August Thalheimer, all of them university-educated.

Born in Poland and long active as a theorist and agitator in the Polish and German socialist movements, Rosa Luxemburg had spurned parliamentary democracy as a "petty-bourgeois illusion" and referred to the German Social Democrats as the *"Schabbesgoyim"* (Gentiles engaged to perform work not permitted to religious Jews on the Sabbath) of the German capitalists. The theorist of "revolutionary spontaneity," Luxemburg had long spurred the German proletariat to revolutionary action. In her editorials for the party newspaper, *The Red Flag*, she wrote in December 1918, "In this, the ultimate class struggle of world history and for the sake of the highest goals of humanity, the slogan in regard to our enemies must be 'Thumbs in their eyes, knees to their chest.'" So when the leadership of the Communists called for an armed rising in January 1919, Luxemburg felt duty-bound to support it, even though it enjoyed little popular backing. She was brutally murdered by soldiers of the Free Corps whom the Social Democratic government had called in to suppress the revolt.

In Bavaria, the apex of the revolutionary turmoil was occupied by a coterie of Jewish intellectuals almost totally lacking in political experience. The revolution in Bavaria was planned and headed by Kurt Eisner of the Independent Socialists, who on November 7, 1918 declared the end of the monarchy and the rise of a Bavarian republic. The Munich working classes were swept by a wave of revulsion against the monarchy, which had led the country into the war. It was this disgust with the old regime which allowed Eisner, a bearded, bohemian Jewish theater critic, to come to power in conservative, Catholic, rural, anti-Semitic Bavaria. When the Jewish citizens of Munich wrote begging Eisner to resign in favor of a non-Jew, he responded that the question of origins belonged to "an age that has now been overcome," and remained at the helm.

Massive unemployment and food shortages soon became the order of the day in the new Bavarian Republic, which faced staggering problems of demobilization and the threat of government insolvency due to unrealistic new social-welfare policies. Eisner was a man of high ideals but poor judgment, whose rhetorical radicalism and tactical inconsistency managed to alienate almost all political factions. In January 1919 his party received 2.5 percent of the vote; while on his way to tender his resignation, he was assassinated by a young aristocrat.

After a confused transitional period, a new government, made up in good part of leftist intellectuals of Jewish origin, came to power in Munich on April 7, and declared a Soviet republic. The short-lived regime included the anarchist Gustav Landauer; the playwright Ernst Toller, who announced that the coming of socialism would mean "the liberation of man from all capitalist and spiritual oppression"; the radical orator Erich Mühsam, whose politics were characterized by a friend as the constant attempt to stand to the Left of himself; and Otto Neurath, a socialist theorist who became commissar for socialization. His plans for socialization of almost everything did not get beyond the stage of proclamations, but he was in office long enough to terrify the Bavarian middle and upper classes.

After a week, the first Bavarian Socialist Republic was replaced by a more radical group affiliated with the Communist International, which proclaimed the Second Bavarian Soviet Republic. It was headed by Eugen Leviné-Nissen, a Russian-born follower of Rosa Luxemburg who had been dispatched to Munich by the Communist party. The Social Democrats, the largest party in the elected Bavarian parliament, looked to Berlin for help in repressing the Communists. Troops were duly dispatched by the central government and joined by Free Corps from northern Bavaria. They marched into Munich in May, overturning the Bavarian Soviet Republic in a wave of terror.

Among those who lived through the trauma of the soviet republics was the recently demobilized Adolf Hitler. His anti-Semitism predated the trauma, but it was in its aftermath that he hit upon one of his most seductive themes: the "Jewish-Marxist world conspiracy."

MOST German Jews felt no enthusiasm for the events of November 1918, which they, like many of their fellow Germans, regarded as a national disaster. Moreover, Jewish newspapers in Munich and elsewhere warned that the prominence of revolutionary Jews would lead to increased anti-Semitism. In this, they were correct. When Kurt Eisner was murdered in February 1919, the *Kreuzzeitung*, the venerable organ of Prussian conservatism, opined that he "was among the most evil representatives of the Jews, who in recent months have played so marked a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

role in German history. In the most prominent way, he combined two characteristics of his race, its historical internationalism—for Eisner too is a foreigner by birth [*sic*]—and its racially based idle fancy, in contrast to German realism." Here, then, was another element in the emerging dialectic of disaster: the new image of the Jew implanted in the mind of the German public was derived from the activities of those Jews who were most removed from Judaism or a concern with the fate of Jewry.

The anti-Semites of the German Right did not, of course, restrict their hatred to the Jewish advocates of a Soviet Germany. Their antipathy extended to social democrats and liberal democrats as well. But it was the chance to associate social democrats and liberals with Jewish Communists that made the image of the Jewish Communist revolutionary so useful to the German Right. A Nationalist party poster of 1919 listed, under the heading "Varieties of Cohens," the Communist, social democratic, independent socialist, and democratic parties alongside portraits of leading Jewish politicians in each party.

V

If Jews were highly visible in the revolutions in Russia and Germany, in Hungary they seemed omnipresent.

Virtually forgotten today but widely resonant in its time was the Hungarian Soviet Republic. It began with the collapse of the liberal government in March 1919 and lasted for 133 days until, weakened by inner disintegration, it succumbed to foreign troops. Of the government's 49 commissars, 31 were of Jewish origin.

Among the key members of the Hungarian Soviet Republic were Béla Kun, the foreign secretary and actual head of the regime; Tibor Szamuely, the deputy commissar for war, charged with suppressing the counterrevolution; and Ottó Korvin (Klein), the chief of the secret police. Others included Georg Lukács, the aesthetic philosopher turned Bolshevik, and Mátyás Rákosi (Roth), who three decades later was to become dictator of Hungary. As chairman of the revolutionary governing council they elected Sándor Garbai, a Gentile. Rákosi later joked that Garbai was chosen for his post in order "to have someone who could sign the death sentences on Saturday."

The prominence of Jews in the Hungarian Soviet Republic is all the more striking when one considers that the Jews of Hungary were richer than their co-religionists in Eastern Europe and remarkably successful in attaining positions of status. In the 19th century, Jews had been the major agents of capitalist development in a traditional, rural society comprised of aristocrats, gentry, and peasantry. In the latter part of the century, the children of these Jewish entrepreneurs often entered the universities and moved into professions. Though only 5 percent of the population, on the eve of World War I Jews made up almost half the doctors, lawyers, and journalists in Hungary.

Unlike their counterparts elsewhere, the Magyar upper classes welcomed Jewish assimilation into Hungarian culture, since this added weight to claims of Magyar hegemony in the ethnic balance within the Hungarian half of the Austro-Hungarian empire. Accomplished Jews intermarried with the nobility, were themselves ennobled, and attained positions of high prestige. On the eve of the war the government of Hungary included six or eight ministers of Jewish origin.

The term "of Jewish origin" is especially important in the case of Hungary. For peculiar historical reasons, access to the higher ranks of society and government was largely conditional upon conversion to Christianity. Thus the agnostic, secularized, educated children of the Jewish bourgeoisie were confronted with the bizarre fact that their entry into the rather liberal, even anticlerical Hungarian establishment required that they undergo the ritual of baptism. Some declined the offer as a hypocritical farce. Others decided that Budapest was worth a mass, only to find themselves confronted by an acute crisis of identity.

In either case, the secularized Jewish intelligentsia of Hungary was naturally attracted to the ideology of radical internationalist socialism, which promised a political community based on universalism rather than on religious or national particularism. The literature of prerevolutionary Hungarian radicalism is rife with attacks on Judaism and the Jews—attacks often penned by intellectuals of Jewish origin.

When they seized power in 1919 the revolutionaries acted in accordance with their principles. Statues of Hungarian kings and national heroes were torn down, the national anthem was banned, and the display of the national colors was made a punishable offense. Nor did the revolutionaries forget their antipathy to *Jewish* particularism: traditionalist Jews became the targets of their campaigns of terror.

Radical agitators were dispatched to the countryside, where they ridiculed the institution of the family and threatened to turn churches into movie theaters. More thoroughgoing than Lenin, the Hungarian revolutionaries socialized all estates over one hundred acres in size, rather than distributing land to the peasants. Nationalized too were business establishments with over ten employees, all apartments, all furniture "superfluous for everyday life," gold, jewelry, coin and stamp collections. The principles of egalitarianism were strenuously applied. All wages were made uniform. All graves in Budapest were to be identical, and the sale of double plots forbidden. Much of the bourgeois press was first censored, then closed down.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The regime's policies soon alienated most Hungarians. Uniform wages combined with a government guarantee of employment led to a radical decline of productivity. The regime attempted to set all prices, with little regard to production costs. Goods were soon scarce and prices on the black market were highly inflated. Peasants chose to withhold agricultural goods, rather than exchange them for currency with which they could buy little.

Antipathy soon enough focused on Jews. Young revolutionary intellectuals of Jewish origin had been sent to the countryside to administer the newly collectivized agricultural estates; their radicalism was exceeded only by their incompetence, reinforcing peasant anti-Semitism. The Jesuits, for their part, interpreted the revolution as Jewish and anti-Christian in essence, though the regime's anti-religious campaign was in fact headed by a defrocked priest. Rumors abounded that the revolutionaries were everywhere desecrating the host. In Budapest as in the countryside, opposition to the regime, defense of the Church, and anti-Semitism went hand in hand.

The Kun regime fell in 1919, overwhelmed by political and economic difficulties and ultimately crushed by Rumanian troops acting with the encouragement of Hungarian opponents of the regime. When the Rumanians withdrew from Budapest, they turned over power to Admiral Horthy and the Magyar ruling class. After the Red terror—some 600 executions in 133 days in a country of eight million—came the White terror of the counterrevolution, aimed not only at officials and sympathizers of the fallen Red regime but at the Jewish community as such.

The Magyar ruling class, which before the war would not have tolerated such behavior, accepted the excesses as a necessary reaction to the terror which had preceded it. Though the situation of the Jews improved in the 1920's under the rather liberal regime of Count Bethlen, the Hungarian ruling class came under ever greater pressure from the radical Right which had been forged in the counterrevolution and had made political anti-Semitism the core of its program.

VI

POLITICAL anti-Semitism was itself a recent development on the European scene. Until the 19th century, European anti-Semitism had been predominantly religious in nature, grounded in the antipathy of the Christian churches to those who willingly spurned the ideas of the gospels. But with the development of industrial capitalism in the 19th century, the focus changed: it was now the Jew as capitalist who was attacked as the destroyer and despoiler of traditional society. For the new political anti-Semites, the Rothschilds and Bleichroeders were "*rois de l'époque*," the kings of the age.

In Western and Central Europe, anti-Semitism of this stripe reached its height in the last decades of the 19th century, and seemed on the wane by 1914. But the conspicuous role of Jews in the revolutions of 1917-19 gave anti-Semitism a new impetus. Now the Jew as revolutionary took his place alongside the Jew as deicide and the Jew as capitalist; the image of Trotsky, Luxemburg, and Kun was superimposed upon those of Rothschild and Ahasverus, the wandering Jew of medieval Christian myth, rootless and eternally cursed for having spurned Christ.

Among the books which spread the image of the Jew as Communist revolutionary was *Quand Israël est roi* ("When Israel Is King"), an eyewitness account of the Hungarian Soviet Republic published in 1921 by Jean and Jérôme Tharaud. The authors, long identified with the French radical Right, were former winners of the Prix Goncourt and well known for a series of travel books merging reportage with poetic evocation. Their new book portrayed the Hungarian revolution as a Jewish conspiracy, with some non-Jews thrown in as figureheads. "After the dynasty of the Arpád, after St. Stephen and his sons, after the Anjous and the Hunyadis and the Hapsburgs, there was a King of Israel in Hungary today," the brothers reported, and went on to describe in lurid and somewhat fanciful detail the terror of the "Lenin Boys" (the Red Guard) and the torture employed by the political-investigation department under Ottó Korvin. Interspersed with accounts of the confiscation of wealth by the revolutionaries and the replacement of Christian professors by young Jewish intellectuals were reflections such as this: "A New Jerusalem was growing up on the banks of the Danube. It emanated from Karl Marx's Jewish brain, and was built by Jews upon a foundation of very ancient ideas." The book sold 55,000 copies in France, went through scores of editions, and was translated into other languages, including English and German. (In 1933 the Tharauds would entitle their book on the new Nazi regime *Quand Israël n'est plus roi*—"When Israel Is No Longer King.")

The image of Jew as Bolshevik became the center of the new mythos of the Right. In its most radical and racist form, this mythos was read backward into history, as in the title of a pamphlet published in 1923 by Hitler's intellectual mentor, Dietrich Eckart, *Bolshevism from Moses to Lenin: A Dialogue Between Adolf Hitler and Myself.*

A clear-eyed analyst would have concluded that few Jews were, in fact, Communists, and that most Communists were not Jews. But Jewish Communists were viewed through a lens colored by previous anti-Semitic stereotypes. To conclude that the Jewish revolutionary and the Jewish capitalist were actually partners working both sides of the street on their road to the conquest of Christian civilization may have required a skewed vision,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

but this in fact was how the interwar Right viewed the Jewish question.

VII

As FOR the depth, extent, and nature of anti-Semitism in the various European countries, that depended in large measure upon the social, political, and cultural roles of the Jews in general, and in particular upon the relative significance of the Jewish Communists. Where there had been no attempted revolutions, or where Jews played no conspicuous role in them, the myth of Judeo-Communism did not become predominant on the Right. This was the case in Western Europe, which was spared both the revolutionary wave and the threat of Soviet conquest. (Although Italy did experience revolutionary seizures of land and industrial property in 1920 and 1921, few of the leaders of the radical Left had been Jews. In Italy, where the nationalist Right had long been open to those of Jewish origin, Jews were more likely to be found among the supporters of the Fascists than among the revolutionaries of the Left.)

By contrast, the identification of Jews with Communism was especially potent in those areas which had encountered Jewish revolutionaries at first hand in the postwar era: in Germany, Hungary, Poland, the Ukraine, and later Lithuania.

We have already looked at the cases of Germany and Hungary. In Poland, the image of the Jew as Bolshevik was exacerbated by the fact that during the Soviet attack on the country in 1919, the Russians had set up a four-man Provisional Revolutionary Committee, two members of which were Jewish. In Rumania, the Communist party was headed by a rabbi's daughter, Ana Pauker, and many posts in its upper echelons were filled by Jews. Finally, when Lithuania was annexed by the Soviet Union in 1940, the Soviets, following a pattern which they were to repeat throughout Eastern Europe, looked to the small and disproportionately Jewish band of Lithuanian Communists to assist them in establishing Soviet hegemony.

In no nation of Eastern Europe did the Communist party have a broad popular base. (Czechoslovakia, where at its peak the party obtained 13 percent of the vote, was a partial exception.) This meant that even if a tiny proportion of Jews was attracted to Communism, the party would appear "Jewish." From among the 3.3 million Jews in interwar Poland, the Communist party garnered 5,000 members, but since the party's membership totaled only 20,000, this minuscule number of Jews made up a quarter of its membership. In Lithuania, one-third of the Communist party was made up of Jews in 1940—but there were only 2,000 Lithuanian Communists in all. Out of a Jewish population of 150,000, fewer than 700 were Communists, but in such cases it did not take very many Jewish Communists to make the party appear "Jewish" to outsiders.

To be sure, in much of Eastern Europe anti-Semitism long antedated the Bolshevik Revolution, and would have been a substantial factor in interwar politics even without the prominence of Jews in the Communist movement. In the new nations which emerged from the disintegration of the old Romanov and Hapsburg empires, Jews were suspect for having identified with German, Russian, or Hungarian culture, rather than that of the new nationalities. In Hungary, Poland, and Rumania, where Jews had long formed the bulk of the commercial and professional middle classes, their role was now challenged by the newly emerging middle classes, whose opportunities for advancing were limited by the relatively constricted economy of the region. For these new aspiring middle classes, it was economically rewarding to regard the Jews as "outsiders." At the same time, Jews active in the commercialization of the rural economy were often resented by the peasantry, who blamed the Jews for their economic woes. The hatred of the Jew as Communist was thus just one more ingredient in the anti-Semitic stew, flavoring it to various degrees of intensity from nation to nation.

In Germany, where political anti-Semitism had been on the wane before 1914, the role of Jews in the postwar revolutions was the key element in the revival of anti-Semitism on the Right. With Hitler's consolidation of his control over Germany, a coterie of ideologically radical anti-Semites stood at the head of the most powerful nation in Europe. After the German invasion of the Soviet Union, this new anti-Semitism, fused with the pseudo-scientific ideology of racism, guided the actions of Hitler's army and the SS. It soon developed into a campaign of extermination, a campaign in which the Germans were aided by indigenous accomplices throughout Eastern Europe.

The Nazis and their collaborators managed within a few years to murder six out of every seven Jews in Eastern and Central Europe. Yet in the years after Hitler's defeat, Jews appeared once again on the stage of East European politics. With the conquest of much of Eastern and Central Europe by the Red Army in 1944 and 1945, the dialectic of disaster took a new turn.

VIII

AT THE close of the war there were some 700,000 Jews in Eastern Europe. Some had managed to hide, others to survive the concentration camps. Hundreds of thousands of Jewish refugees from the region of Poland occupied by the Germans in 1939 had fled to the Soviet zone, whence they were deported by the Russians deep into the Soviet Union. Later, they were

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

joined by Jewish refugees from Eastern Poland, conquered by the Germans in 1941.

Those who survived the years in Siberia or the kolkhozes of Central Asia returned to Poland after the war. Their firsthand experience of Communism in the USSR made them among the most eager to leave Soviet-occupied Poland for Palestine or the West. For the rest of the Jews of Eastern and Central Europe, however, the march of the Red Army literally saved their lives, and many welcomed the Russians with open arms.

When they returned to their homes, the survivors often found them occupied by strangers. Their businesses, furniture, and even clothing had been claimed by others, who were appalled to witness the unanticipated return of these Jewish survivors, and engaged in threats and violence to keep them from reclaiming their property. This new confiscatory middle class had its own reasons for wanting to see the Jews vanish again, and played a role in the wave of pogroms that swept over Eastern Europe in 1945 and 1946, the best known of which took place in Kielce in July 1946 at a cost of 41 Jewish lives.

Yet these outbursts had another cause as well. Among the leading agents of Soviet control in Poland, Hungary, Rumania, and Czechoslovakia were a handful of veteran Communists who had spent years in the Soviet Union while their parties had been outlawed and their homelands suffered under German occupation. Some of those who had returned with the Red Army were survivors of the Great Purge; their survival was itself evidence of their loyalty to Stalin.

Many of the returning Communists—subsequently known as "Muscovites"—were Jews. In Hungary, as we shall see in greater detail below, the top leaders of the Communist party were Jewish Muscovites. In Czechoslovakia, the general secretary of the Communist party, Rudolf Slansky, was a Jew. Among the Muscovite Jewish leaders of postwar Poland were Jakub Berman, who headed the secret police; Hilary Minc, who was in charge of the economy; Roman Zambrowski (born Rubin Nussbaum), the secretary of the party's central committee; and Jacek Rozanski (born Goldberg), the NKVD-trained head of the investigative department of the ministry of public security, a psychopath known for torturing his victims. In Rumania, the real head of the regime was Ana Pauker, secretary of the party central committee, first deputy prime minister, and foreign minister. (Pauker is said to have denounced her husband Marcel, a leading Comintern official, as a Trotskyite. He was arrested in Russia in 1936, and liquidated in 1937.) Other pillars of the Rumanian regime included Iosif Chisinevski, Leonte Rautu, and Mihail Roller—all Jewish Muscovites.

There were few Jewish Muscovites in the leadership of the East German regime, but this was because many of the German Jewish Communist exiles in the USSR who had managed to survive the Great Purge were handed over to the Gestapo in 1939 after the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact. One exception was Markus Wolf, the son of a Jewish Communist doctor from Stuttgart, who had spent his adolescence and young adulthood in Moscow and returned to Germany as an officer of the Red Army. Active at first in the propaganda apparatus of the regime, Wolf later built the East German military espionage service, which he headed until 1987.

In addition to Wolf, there was also a small but significant trickle of Communist-oriented intellectuals of Jewish origin who had spent the war years in the West, and now returned to help create a Communist regime in Germany which would do away with what they regarded as the capitalist roots of National Socialism. Most conspicuous was Gerhard Eisler, a veteran functionary of the Comintern who vanished from the United States after he was subpoenaed by the House Commitee on Un-American Activities in 1949. Eisler emerged in East Germany as the head of the new Office of Information, the propaganda ministry of the new regime. His brother Hanns Eisler left the United States under "voluntary deportation" in 1948, moved to East Germany, and wrote the music for the national anthem of the new German Democratic Republic.

THE utilization of Jews in prominent positions in the Soviet-sponsored regimes was, to use an apposite phrase, "no accident." In the newly conquered nations of Eastern and Central Europe, the Soviets had few reliable supporters. Suspicion of Russian imperialism was old and well-founded, and anti-Communism almost a national religion. The tiny native Communist parties had been decimated during the war. The Muscovite Jews, tried and tested in the Stalinist crucible, were among the very few natives whom the Soviets could trust to carry out their plans.

These veteran Communists were joined by younger Jews, disillusioned with the failed bourgeois assimilationism of their parents, having little knowledge of the Soviet Union, and attracted to an ideology which promised to do away with ethnic hatreds once and for all. Because they were familiar with local conditions and fanatically anti-fascist, Jews were often chosen for the security police. Because of their high level of education, they were particularly active in the fields of propaganda and education. Those who spoke foreign languages staffed the ministries of foreign affairs and departments of foreign trade.

Thus, members of a people who had recently been deported or murdered amid the general indifference or active complicity of their neighbors now appeared as high officials of the government and the police. They did so under the auspices of the Red Army, and as the executors of the will of the Soviet Union. To much of the population

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of Poland, Rumania, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia, these Jewish Communists appeared as aliens, imposing an alien system in the service of an alien power.

The upshot was a renewal of anti-Semitism. The local populace took no notice of the fact that the new Soviet-backed regimes subverted and then liquidated Jewish communal and religious institutions, or of the fact that most local Jews, far from supporting the Communists, voted with their feet by emigrating westward. Hostility was focused on the collaborators of Jewish descent, rather than on the many non-Jews who staffed the new regime.

The Jews who tossed in their lot with the new regime quickly recognized that they had to rely entirely on the Soviets not only for their positions but for their very lives. Whether out of necessity or design, Stalin had created a class of people wholly dependent on him, hence extraordinarily pliable. It was partly for this reason that, while Stalin launched an anti-Semitic campaign inside the Soviet Union in 1948, in Eastern Europe he maintained his support for his Jewish pawns, at least for a few years. His motives for doing so were linked to the specter of Titoism which gripped the Kremlin in the late 1940's: the Communists of Jewish origin seemed the least likely to form an alliance with the local populace against the hegemony of the Soviets.

In the early 1950's, however, the Titoist scare passed, and the Soviets were in a position to sacrifice their Eastern European Jewish pawns. In an attempt to broaden their own popular support, even some local Communist leaders of Jewish origin tried to use the Soviet-generated renewal of anti-Semitism for their own purposes. Ultimately, it was far more potent as a weapon when turned against them.

IX

The pattern common to Eastern Europe manifested itself with particular force in Hungary. Nowhere were Jews more prominent in the Sovietization of the nation. At the core of the process was the handful of Muscovites who had spent years and even decades in the Soviet Union. During the interwar period the Hungarian Communist party had been banned and unpopular; its membership was tiny; and its leadership was disproportionately Jewish. In postwar Hungary, the key post of general secretary was once again occupied by a Jew, Mátyás Rákosi.

A veteran Communist who, as we have seen, had been active in the Hungarian Soviet Republic of 1919, Rákosi was subsequently betrayed by a fellow Communist and imprisoned for years by the Horthy regime. Traded to the Soviet Union in 1940, Rákosi spent the war years in Moscow and learned the requisite skills for survival in Stalinist Russia. He billed himself as "Stalin's best pupil," and was at the side of the "sun of the peoples" during the celebrations marking the dictator's seventieth birthday in 1949. It was this pupil of Stalin who coined the term "salami tactics" to describe the way in which the Communists with the backing of the Red Army sliced away all competing parties on their path to exclusive control.

The next three major slots in the Communist hierarchy were also filled by men of Jewish birth. Ernö Gerö (Singer), a Muscovite and veteran of the Spanish Civil War, became minister of state; Mihály Farkas (Wolf), another Muscovite, became minister of defense; and József Révai was the party's chief ideologist and minister of culture. The chief of the Hungarian economy was Zoltán Vas (Weinberger), also of Jewish origin and a Muscovite.

As was the case in every other country, only a minority of Hungarian Jews were Communists. Obviously, those who valued their Jewishness the most were the least inclined toward the party, and many Hungarian Jews feared that it was they who would pay for the popular hatred of the regime.

Yet the core of Muscovites was also joined by a larger number of Hungarian Jews. Some, who had returned from concentration camps or who survived the war in Budapest, owed to the Soviets their escape from death at the hands of the Nazis and their Hungarian collaborators of the Arrow Cross. For them, at least, the Soviets were "liberators," even if few of their countrymen regarded them as such, and the Red Army remained the only real guarantor of their safety.

Alongside this motive of physical preservation there was among some young Jews a burning desire for vengeance against the Hungarians who had murdered their families or aided the Germans in doing so. These young men and women joined the new Soviet-dominated security apparatus, for which they were suited by their knowledge of Hungarian conditions and their allegiance to the Soviet cause. It is estimated that 30 percent or more of higher police officials in the postwar years were of Jewish origin, and many departments of the security apparatus were headed by Jews. At the pinnacle of the Hungarian political police, the AVO, was a Jew, Major General Gábor Péter (born Benö Auspitz). By moving into the army, the police, and the security apparatus, these young Jewish survivors put themselves in a position to settle accounts with the men of the Arrow Cross.

The attractions of Marxist ideology also drew some of the more idealistic young Jewish survivors. The universalism of Marxism, its promise to end all distinctions based upon ethnic or religious origin, was almost irresistible to some young Jews who could recall only the irredentist nationalism of the interwar era, the growth of Hungarian fascism and official anti-Semitism, the deadly "labor battalions" into which the Horthy regime had consigned all Jewish males from six-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

teen to sixty-five, and finally the systematic murder of the Jews under German auspices but with Hungarian collaboration.

Other Jews who decided to remain in Hungary reconciled themselves to the inevitability of Soviet domination and hoped to make the best of it. Though the socialization measures of the Communist regime destroyed the remnants of the Jewish commercial middle class, some Jews continued to play an important economic role in Hungarian life as heads of newly nationalized industries. And though university admissions were now to favor the offspring of workers and peasants, young Jews active in the Communist party were permitted to enroll.

Hungary was a small country with a small educated elite. Because in Soviet eyes most educated non-Jews were tainted by their ties to the former regime, Jews were catapulted into positions of authority. For a brief moment after the war, Jews seemed to become a privileged class in Hungary. Suddenly, reality seemed to bear out the old stereotype identifying Jews as such with Communism. As a contemporary joke had it, if a factory employed three Jews, one was the manager, a second the accountant, and the third the secretary of the party cell. For those so inclined, it was easier than ever to believe that all Jews were Communists, and since Jews were apparently in prominent positions everywhere, it was even possible to give credence to the anti-Semitic claim that more Jews had returned from the concentration camps than had been deported in 1944. The recrudescence of anti-Semitism erupted in two anti-Jewish riots during the summer of 1946. The fact that the rioters included some Communists was covered up by the local Communist commander, who was himself Jewish.

The Communists' favorable attitude toward the offspring of Jewish victims of fascism began to change in late 1947, when Rákosi decided to end the admission of Jews to official posts. After the elimination of all competing parties in 1948, there followed an era of increasing anti-Jewish repression, initiated and headed by men who were themselves of Jewish origin. In 1949 the representative of the American Jewish Joint Relief Organization in Budapest was arrested and expelled. A ban was placed on Zionist activity, and Hungarian Zionist leaders were imprisoned and forced to appear in show trials. The security services set up a division to deal with Zionism; it was headed by Major János Komlós, who at one time had been a student in the Budapest rabbinical seminary.

Like their counterparts throughout Eastern Europe, the leaders of the Hungarian Communist party set out to emulate the purported successes of the Soviet path of economic development and began a program of rapid industrialization and collectivization of agriculture. As in the Soviet case, the growth of heavy industry was to occur at the expense of the agricultural and consumer sectors—that is, through the increased exploitation of the workers and peasants. The result was a decline of living standards for most Hungarians, coupled with increased governmental repression to prevent protest and revolt. Soon the prisons were filled, and forced-labor camps sprang up around the country, especially near mining and industrial centers. From 1952 through 1955 the police opened files on over a million Hungarians, 45 percent of whom were penalized. In four years, 7 percent of Hungarians over the age of eighteen were convicted and punished.

Together with increased repression went the purge of the party. Most of the members of the erstwhile Communist underground who had remained in Hungary during the war were purged as potential "Titoists," including László Rajk, who was tried and executed on trumped-up charges in 1949. In a few years, the Communist regime of Rákosi killed more Communists than had the anti-Communist regime of Admiral Horthy.

Jews were very salient in the apparatus of repression, including Mihaly Farkas, the minister of defense and chief of internal security, and Gábor Péter of the AVO. Many of Péter's immediate deputies were also Jews who had been trained by the Soviets at the Dzerzhinsky Institute in the USSR. As this apparatus of repression expanded, it recruited those with the most experience at brutal methods of interrogation, namely, former Horthyites and members of the Arrow Cross. Thus former Jewish victims of fascism and former fascists worked side by side in the creation of a Communist Hungary.

THE next act in the drama of Hungarian Jewry was more absurd still. Late in 1952, "Stalin's brightest pupil" learned of the plans for the upcoming "Doctors' Trial" in the homeland of socialism, in which seven of the nine defendants were to be Jews, and in which anti-Semitic themes were to be more blatant than ever. Fearing for their own necks, Rákosi and the Hungarian leadership initiated their own anti-Semitic crusade. The head of the Jewish community, Lajos Stöckler, was arrested. So was the chief of the former Jewish Hospital, László Benedek (though he was a loyal Communist), and a number of Jewish doctors. Like their counterparts in Moscow, the Hungarian Jewish physicians were to be charged with medical crimes.

The leaders of the Jewish central committee of social affairs, the brothers Szücs, were driven to suicide in this campaign, while the Jewish Muscovites rewrote their biographies and recast their style of life to appear more Magyar than the Magyars. Rákosi's official biography now claimed he was descended from the lower Magyar gentry; at the same time, Rákosi spread the false rumor that his leading rival within the party leadership, Imre Nagy, was a Jew.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

There now began a clear policy of eliminating Jews from positions of leadership and from the lower cadres of the party. Vas, the chairman of central planning, was purged. Jews were eliminated as officers of the police and the AVO; in January 1953, Gábor Péter himself was imprisoned. Plans were made for an anti-cosmopolitan, anti-Zionist show trial, at which Péter would be a star defendant. Only the death of Stalin prevented the anti-Semitic trial, which would have been presided over by Jewish Communists.

The end of the Titoist specter and the revolt of the East Berliners against Soviet domination in June 1953 gave Stalin's successors second thoughts about Soviet policy in Eastern Europe. Rákosi was summoned to Moscow and chastised before the Presidium—though he had merely carried out faithfully the policy of his Russian model, including the cult of personality. Beria addressed Rákosi in words which echoed the Tharauds' *Quand Israël est roi* of three decades before: "We know that there have been in Hungary, apart from its own rulers, Turkish sultans, Austrian emperors, Tartar khans, and Polish princes. But, as far as we know, Hungary has never had a Jewish king. Apparently this is what you have become. Well, you can be sure we won't allow it."

Rákosi was replaced as premier by the non-Jewish Imre Nagy. But the Soviets, who considered Rákosi and Gerö the most slavishly reliable of the Hungarian Communists, soon put Rákosi back in the saddle (in April 1955). Rákosi then had Nagy expelled from the party. On both sides of the struggle between the Stalinists and the more reformist Communists around Nagy, Jews were well-represented.

As the threat of popular revolution grew in Hungary, the Soviet leadership reluctantly decided to sacrifice the Jewish Muscovites. In July 1956, Rákosi was removed from office by the Soviets and spirited away to Moscow in disgrace. His successor, Gerö, proved no more popular but less crafty; in October, with revolution under way in the streets of Budapest, it was his turn for the flight to Moscow, as the Russians offered their support to Nagy.

When the spontaneous revolution threatened the overthrow of the Communist regime, even non-Communist Hungarian Jews (especially outside the capital) came to fear for their lives, on the grounds that Jews as such were identified with Communism in the public mind. During the "Hungarian October" and its aftermath, over 20,000 of the 120,000 Jews remaining in Hungary departed for the West. In November, Nagy's bold attempt to form a multiparty government and withdraw from the Warsaw Pact led to Soviet intervention and the brutal repression of the Hungarian revolution.

János Kádár, a Communist who had himself been tortured by the secret police during the Rákosi era, was installed by the Soviets as their new man in Budapest. Desperate for public support, some members of the Kádár regime tried to "play the national card." One of Kádár's ministers, György Márosan—whose wife was of Jewish origin—emphasized in his speeches that the new leadership was not made up of Jews. Many of the Jews who remained in Hungary, afraid that popular loathing of the former Muscovite leadership would result in an outbreak of overt anti-Semitism, rallied to Kádár nevertheless. While he was in power, Jews were not excluded from positions of prestige and responsibility. With the transfer of leadership to Károly Grósz in May of this year, their future in Hungary remains an open question.

X

EVENTS elsewhere in the postwar Soviet bloc followed a similar pattern, often with more disastrous results for the Jews. The consolidation of Communist hegemony under Muscovite leadership was regularly followed by the subversion of the organized Jewish community, with Zionists singled out for especially harsh treatment. As the masses increasingly showed themselves ready to engage in open revolt against the hated system imposed by the USSR, the Soviets everywhere tried to sacrifice the Jewish Muscovites and replace them with less unpopular "native" Communist leaders. These in turn often found it convenient to divert anti-Communist sentiment into the channels of anti-Semitism.

In Czechoslovakia, where the Communists established their dictatorship in 1948, the general secretary of the party was Rudolf Slansky, a veteran Communist of Jewish origin, and a Muscovite. With Communist hegemony secure, a purge aimed at non-Moscow Communists was set in motion in 1950. Jews were conspicuous objects of a second wave of purges in 1951, which included among its victims the deputy general secretary of the party, Josef Frank, and Jewish deputy ministers of foreign affairs, foreign trade, and finance. Finally, in November 1951, Slansky—who less than two years earlier had offered the official tribute to Stalin on the occasion of the latter's seventieth birthday—was arrested.

Slansky became the focus of the most infamous show trial of the postwar era, organized with the close cooperation of agents of the Soviet ministry of state security. Of the fourteen leading party members placed on trial for crimes against the state in 1952, twelve were Jews. In the official indictment, their names were followed by the words "of Jewish origin." The charges against them included "Zionism," "Titoism," "Trotskyism," and collaboration with "Western imperialist espionage." All of the defendants were convicted, and eleven were sentenced to death.

All this happened in a country where most Jews had reacted to the coming of Communism by

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

getting up and going. By 1950, three-quarters of the Jews of Czechoslovakia had emigrated, leaving fewer than 20,000, or one-fifteenth of 1 percent of the population. Just as this did not prevent Slansky and the others from being tried and convicted as Jews, it did not prevent the Czech government from launching a vehement anti-Zionist campaign in 1968.

In Rumania, the old Muscovite leadership in which minorities in general and Jews in particular loomed so large was replaced in a deliberate policy of "Rumanianization." The process began with the purge of Ana Pauker in 1952, and continued under Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej. Under Pauker an intensive anti-Zionist campaign had been launched in 1949. The arrest and imprisonment of Zionists continued through the 1950's. (In Rumania, too, Jews did their best to depart. Of the 385,000 Jews in the country at war's end, 256,000 remained in 1949; by 1955, there were fewer than 200,000.)

In East Germany, where there were few Jews and almost no Jewish Muscovites, the process occurred in miniature and with variations. Early in 1953, Gerhard Eisler was dropped from the Office of Information. Paul Merker, a former member of the Politburo known for his philo-Semitism, was arrested and plans were made to put him on trial for his contacts with "agents of Western imperialism." Jews were arrested by the security police and imprisoned. After the announcement of the "Doctors' Plot" in *Pravda* on January 13, 1953, the leaders of the Jewish communities of East Berlin, Dresden, Erfurt, and Leipzig escaped to the West. In the weeks that followed they were joined by hundreds of other East German Jews. Stalin's death brought an end to the threat against the few Jews remaining in East Germany.

In Poland the pattern was the same, but the results more dramatic. There the regime was headed by a Communist of Catholic origin, Boleslaw Bierut, but as we have seen, the head of the security service, Jakub Berman, the chief of the economic planning commission, Hilary Minc, and one of the party's leading ideologists, Roman Werfel, were all of Jewish origin. Minc presided over the raising of work norms and shrinkage of the standard of living entailed by the Soviet Union's demands upon the Polish economy, while Werfel toed the stultifying Zhdanovist line in the cultural realm. The pattern of Jewish overrepresentation in the party and especially in the security services made the highly unpopular regime less popular still.

In 1954, on orders from the Soviet embassy, leading Jewish members of the Polish regime were demoted. After popular revolt against Stalinism reached its peak in October 1956, the Muscovite leadership was replaced by the "nativist" Wladyslaw Gomulka, and Berman and the other Jewish Muscovites were blamed for the "errors" of the past. Those few Jews who elected to remain in Poland—Jewish institutions had been liquidated in 1949-50, and by 1953 fewer than 40,000 Jews were left in the country—were largely purged in the anti-Semitic campaign of 1968. The last remnants of the Communist Jewish intelligentsia were dropped, to the satisfaction of the younger generation of cadres born and raised in the new Poland.

XI

The history of Jews and Communism in Central and Eastern Europe deserves a fuller chronicle and more detailed analysis. Historians who have focused on the utopian ideals espoused by revolutionary Jews have diverted attention from the fact that these Communists of Jewish origin, no less than their non-Jewish counterparts, were led by their ideals to take part in heinous crimes—against Jews and non-Jews alike. Moreover, the conspicuous role played by Jews in the Communist movement, though rarely the primary cause of anti-Jewish sentiment, nevertheless fanned the flames of anti-Semitism. The prediction of the chief rabbi of Moscow proved tragically prophetic: "The Trotskys make the revolutions, and the Bronsteins pay the bills."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Living With Women's Lib

Ruth R. Wisse

WHEN the women's movement began to show some muscle in the late 60's and early 70's, I decided it was a passing fad, like the hula hoop. It did not seem possible to me that ideas in such obvious contradiction of the facts should be able to inspire and propel a serious mass movement. Convinced that women were the practical gender, I was sure they would never be deceived by false ideology, and I expected the movement to evaporate as quickly as it had materialized. It was the worst cultural prediction of my life.

The women's movement first appeared to me in the form of Farla Kronenberg (not her real name). Farla's younger sister had been my bunkmate at camp from the time we were eight, and I guess that Farla and I were originally drawn together in dumb protest against the unfairness of life's endowments. Her sister had been the most beautiful girl at camp and later the carnival queen of our high school: confident that her natural appeal would never be diminished no matter how many smiles she lavished, she won the heart of every boy within a four-year radius. It was bad enough for me, who only had this glorious girl as a temporary summer roommate. My sympathy for Farla, who had her forever, knew no bounds.

I actually preferred Farla to her younger sister. She was not bad looking by normal standards, and she had a critical vigor that made her seem even smarter than she was. For a time when we were undergraduates at McGill she took me on as her junior debating partner, and in more than one collegiate meet her wit proved our sharpest weapon. While her sister joined a sorority, became engaged to a stellar young man of good family, and continued to radiate like the sun, Farla became something of a campus celebrity, with her own weekly column in the school paper and an interview show on a local radio station.

She seemed, however, very stupid about boys. She sniped at those who liked her, and mooned over the handsome fraternity types who ignored her, not the way some of us would develop a secret crush on a boy and whisper our dream into the pillow, but willfully and publicly. She would invite one of these haughty upperclassmen to host a party she intended to give and when he turned her down she would promptly ask him to a movie or a concert, so that he had to say no and no and sometimes no again before she gave up. Later, when the engagements and marriages started in our circle, she would turn up at parties in provocative dresses and talk so grossly about the physical properties of her date of the moment that you knew she had no hope of enjoying them. Then, a year out of college, she married a fellow she had met the previous month at a wedding in New Jersey. His name was Martin, but she always called him Angel, a comment on his beauty but also, I fear, on the scanty physical impression he was making on her. Within the year he was firmly lodged in her father's business and in her friends' beds. Long before men had turned into the kind of primping fashion plates some of them have since become, I was present when Martin and Farla showed up at a party and the hostess greeted them with, "Oh, Marty, what a beautiful suit!"

It was Farla, then, in the first years of her marriage, who invited me to read Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*. The book, she said, defined everything that was going wrong in her own life, and clarified the problem of contemporary women. Since at the time I too was riddled with plenty of doubts about the quality and meaning of my life, I took up the book eagerly, looking for the enlightenment that she claimed to have found in it.

I read: "The feminine mystique says that the highest value and the only commitment for women is the fulfillment of their own femininity." American society, including in the form of women's magazines and Madison Avenue, had cultivated and fostered this mystique, making the housewife feel guilty if she aspired to anything beyond her daily drudgery. Psychotherapy assisted in the fraud. Freud, in whose Vienna women had been denied all opportunities to realize their full potential, developed theories rationalizing this culturally-induced condition and making it seem inevitable. Although feminists and suffragettes

RUTH R. WISSE, a regular contributor, is professor of Yiddish literature at McGill University. She is co-editor (with Irving Howe and Khone Shmeruk) of *The Penguin Book of Modern Yiddish Verse* (Viking), and the author, most recently, of *A Little Love in Big Manhattan*, a biography of the Yiddish poets Mani Leib and Moishe Leib Halpern (Harvard University Press).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

had won the fight for civic equality, they had been defeated by the mystique which prevented women from practicing it. And so forth, chapter after chapter.

I was stunned. This was demagoguery not about subjects I was used to—Jews, the middle class—but about women, and it caught me by surprise. The very term "mystique," with its sinister overtones, implied that women were being manipulated by powers outside themselves, insidious forces of persuasion, distortion, and oppression. But to what did the term actually correspond? Why should the actions of women, the *choices* of women, be attributed to something beyond themselves? I knew that I and every other woman around me—particularly those of the older generation—were persons of independent will and firm character. In fact, both in my own extended family and among the families of my friends, I had rarely known anything but female-dominated households; quite a number of these families, including mine, bore the names of female ancestors. Yet here was Betty Friedan describing an entire sex of victims. It seemed to me that in the name of sisterly compassion she was actually expressing contempt, putting women down as victims of fate, rather than partners in the human drama, so that she could pretend to come to their rescue.

Of course she was on to something important. By the beginning of the 60's, World War II almost forgotten, and American prosperity in full swing, a healthy, fairly well-to-do woman like Betty Friedan could raise her children in unprecedented peace and plenty without exhausting her energy or ruining her body. Suddenly the role of mother and nurturer had been lightened almost to the point of weightlessness, incidentally by the very family-oriented market forces Betty Friedan deplored. The fact of raising a family, which throughout human history had figured as a woman's most important contribution to society, was now no longer enough to occupy more than half her life—with diaper services, maybe, even less than that. On top of this, overpopulation was becoming a great issue, and women began to be made as aware of their sudden superfluity as of their abundant spare time and beckoning opportunities.

Yet even then I could see plainly that Betty Friedan had inverted the terms of the problem. The dissatisfaction that she ascribed to women's confinement in the female role was actually the result of their liberation from that role. The restlessness that she documented in women like herself derived from one of the most radical changes in human history—the expectation that one could raise in health and safety as many children as one could bear. In my endless discussions with Farla I pointed out that I myself was the child of a twelfth or thirteenth child on my mother's side, a ninth child on my father's side, while each of her parents had about a dozen living and dead siblings as well. Both my mother and hers had lost a child before we were born; their greatest dream must have been to keep *us* alive, knowing as they did how fragile children were, how much luck and skill it took to nurture them to full maturity. If women now, after the great Depression, after the world war, and, in the case of our two families, after harrowing escapes from Europe, had been granted the gift of long life both for themselves and their children, the only thing they could be suffering was the syndrome Erich Fromm had dubbed the "escape from freedom."

NOT long before reading *The Feminine Mystique*, I had read Primo Levi's account of Auschwitz, and a passage in his book *If This Is a Man* (later renamed *Survival in Auschwitz*) kept recurring to me. I copied it out to show to Farla:

> For human nature is such that grief and pain—even simultaneously suffered—do not add up as a whole in our consciousness, but hide, the lesser behind the greater, according to a definite law of perspective. It is providential and is our means of surviving in the camp. And this is the reason why so often in free life one hears it said that man is never content. In fact it is not a question of a human incapacity for a state of absolute happiness, but of an ever-insufficient knowledge of the complex nature of the state of unhappiness; so that the single name of the major cause is given to all its causes, which are composite and set out in an order of urgency. And if the most immediate cause of stress comes to an end, you are grievously amazed to see that another one lies behind; and in reality a whole series of others.
>
> So that as soon as the cold, which throughout the winter had seemed our only enemy, had ceased, we became aware of our hunger; and repeating the same error we now say: "If it was not for the hunger! . . ."

Levi has this habit of distilling general human truths from his unprecedented personal experience, and this particular definition of unhappiness seemed to me highly appropriate to our situation, mine and Farla's. Was not the "women's problem" a symptom of the relative ease of our lives, our dissatisfaction—the intelligent animal's vital sign—a tribute to the fact that we were no longer burdened with our parents' struggle for survival? I did not say this made our problems less acute, but they were the problems of greater choice, richer liberty. In offering up the passage from Primo Levi's book, I suspect I was also trying to remind Farla of our miraculous privilege, for her family had come to Canada from Germany not long before we ourselves arrived in 1940, and they too constituted a tiny remnant of a once-vast clan.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I WAS genuinely puzzled by Farla's resistance to my argument, written on her face as I spoke. There we sat with our babies in the park, which is just where I wanted to be. Farla and I had part-time jobs, and *au pair* girls living at home to take care of the children when we were out. We were constantly complaining to each other about the unending series of interruptions to our well-made schedules; and though I am ashamed to confess it, we were still spinning sexual fantasies more appropriate to teen-agers than to mothers. But I still assumed that for Farla, as for me, these irritations were inevitable imperfections in an otherwise blessed existence. And if not blessed, then ours to change. If you don't want this kind of life, I said, why don't you do something else? Take on a full-time housekeeper and a full-time job, if not immediately then when Jonathan goes to nursery school. Can you really suppose it was the feminine mystique that made you want to marry, made you choose your husband, made you have your baby? Had you read Betty Friedan's book earlier, would you have acted otherwise?

Farla dismissed me impatiently. It was not simply a question of her personal happiness, she said, but of sexual discrimination. (Our talk began to resemble one of our college debates, except that now we were on opposing sides.) Could I not see the larger issue at stake—the liberation of women from the demeaning images that relegated them to a permanently inferior status? Why should women make the beds and sit in the park while men made the money and sat on the bench? Who determined the roles of "motherhood" and "fatherhood" in the first place? The relative happiness I had spoken of was dictated by relative expectations, and my satisfactory adjustment to motherhood was only a response to conditioning. Levi's words were applicable, indeed—for he was explaining the condition of slaves forced to scramble for crumbs at the hands of their masters. My contentment, too, was that of a slave, but one who did not recognize her enslavement and therefore thought she was free. Consciousness of abuse was the necessary first step toward its correction. If I resisted the idea of the new feminism it was because I was so thoroughly part of the problem I did not even know what it was to seize control of one's own destiny.

These last phrases struck a nerve. Farla had invited me to read Betty Friedan's book because it spoke to the problems of our lives. When I told her that it did not speak to the problem of *my* life, her confidence was shaken not in the book but in me. The tautology implicit in the term "mystique" became explicit as I saw myself being reduced to a pawn in Farla's theory. In order, presumably, to set me free, she was denying me the freedom of a rational, thinking being. I can't believe that you want to turn sex into ideology, I said incredulously. This totalitarian language—you are either part of the problem or part of the solution—is just a crude adaptation of the Marxist analysis of class conflict, which is crude enough already. Besides, if women are now the oppressed proletariat, do you intend to launch a revolution to free us from our chains? And if we would rather cultivate our bourgeois lives, are we going to have to be reeducated against our will?

As I try to reconstruct this conversation of almost twenty-five years past, I see how incapable I was of taking the threat seriously. It was terrible to feel Farla slipping away from me; she was one of my oldest and dearest friends, my only female intellectual friend, and the changed cast of her own mind now told me that our friendship was doomed. I had seen this kind of hardening of the ideological arteries so many times in my parents' home that I knew it as intimately as I knew my mother's superstitions—eyes that when they looked at you saw only what you ought to be, never what you were. I would not be able to tolerate this prescriptive certainty in a friend. But since not for a moment did I credit the "explanation" she was offering me, I worried only for the friendship, not for our culture. So certain was I that Farla was mistaken that I overlooked the main thing: her wholehearted belief that she had, once and for all, found the cause of her misery. The fallacy of the idea blinded me to its persuasive force.

This was to become the pattern of my response in the years that followed as well. One day in the late 1960's my friend Lionel Tiger came back to speak at our alma mater. He had published, not long before, his anthropological study *Men in Groups*, in which he argued that the association patterns we observe in such areas as sports, business, and fraternal organizations have their biological roots in the bonding habits of male animals. The controversial nature of the thesis made it a natural for the lecture circuit, and the hall at McGill was packed.

His talk was held in one of those small amphitheaters where the speaker is at the bottom of an ascending semicircle. Since the seats were all taken, it didn't seem unusual that clusters of girls should have crowded the floor around the podium or stood along the walls high at the back. The function of this arrangement only became apparent when Tiger began to develop his ideas. As the girls down in the front of the room hissed and catcalled, those up in back waved signs reading "Bull Shit Bull Shit." Tiger tried to parry the intrusions with wit and pleasantries, but the heckling grew meaner and the rest of the audience, instead of demanding decorum, began visibly to enjoy the spectacle. Finally Tiger was forced to abandon his talk and open the floor to questions, which consisted of professors and students interrupting one another with loud asides and wisecracks. The girls had succeeded in discrediting the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

invited speaker by turning his lecture into a circus.

I was frankly terrified. I had never before seen an audience transformed into a mob, and I would not have believed it could be done so simply. Everyone knew that this was the handiwork of Marlene Dixon, a Marxist feminist in the sociology department, who deliberately used her classroom as a party cell and who now sat demonstratively among her students, leading the chants. Her well-advertised disdain for the bourgeois forms of the university fairly demanded the use of tactics like these, first taught to her students and now through them to the rest of us. Like Betty Friedan, Marlene Dixon too preached on the "mystification" of family life, but with tightened Marxist foundations. In her view the personal relations between husband and wife had taken on the character of the social relations between capital and labor. So, just as the exploitation of the proletariat required that workers of the world unite, the superexploitation of women—as economic *and* sexual victims at once—now necessitated their organization for battle. She was sure that in this battle Lenin's tactics were justified, and a lecture like Tiger's, under the auspices of a bourgeois pillar of bourgeois society, offered the perfect occasion.

ALTHOUGH I did not see Farla in the audience at Tiger's lecture, I knew that she had returned to McGill for a graduate degree in sociology, with Marlene Dixon as her thesis adviser. We had stopped meeting by then, but I kept track of her progress. Farla did not follow her teacher when the latter (after leaving McGill) became one of the founders of the Democratic Workers party, but neither did she hesitate to apply the party's Marxist rhetoric in her own subsequent campaign to promote women's liberation in Canada. In the coming years Farla was in the vanguard of the demand that wages be paid for housework; and phrases attributed to her in the press—"the relationship within the marriage in which the wife appears to be dependent on the husband's productive labor"—came straight out of Marlene Dixon's writings. Such sentiments sounded ridiculous enough in the mouth of one who had never done any housework in her life, but then the proletariat itself had been similarly defined by people who had never set eyes on a sewing machine or hammer. In this respect, too, Farla was solidly in the Marxist tradition.

As for me, the good bourgeoise, I did nothing to protest Tiger's treatment apart from phoning him privately to commiserate, as if his discomfort were the only thing at stake. Should I offer excuses? I was busy raising a family and trying to finish a doctorate. My status as graduate assistant (for I too had returned to the university) left me somewhere in limbo between students and faculty, without a forum for protest. But mainly I did nothing because I still believed that nothing had to be done, that by their ideas and, now, their behavior the radical feminists had so obviously besmirched themselves and their cause that protest on my part was redundant. I thought I had just seen the bankruptcy of their tactics, when in fact I was witnessing their triumph.

Is triumph too strong a term? Actually, shortly after this incident, Marlene Dixon was denied tenure at McGill.* The Marxist-feminists became a footnote in the history of the movement; the Bolsheviks did not storm the palace. Yet they did not have to. The idea of woman-as-victim seeped into the culture the way environmentalists tell us chemical wastes leach into our water and soil. Relations between men and women, upon which, more than upon any other clause of the social contract, the species depends, were redefined in terms of "power." Young couples took to arguing like trade unionists over whose turn it was to change the baby's diaper. Every schoolgirl came to believe that she who owns the means of production, namely, her body, should be accorded dictatorial control over it.

So it remains in 1988. In today's university mail, I received "guidelines for non-sexist language," endorsed by the McGill Senate Committee on Women. The guidelines instruct me to avoid in my lecture words like "seminal" and "emasculation," which link power to the male role in sex and reproduction. I am also to avoid *quotations* that contain harmful sexist language, by paraphrasing if necessary. Maybe they will soon make me stop writing with a pen, symbol of you-know-what. The Bolshevik tactics introduced by the women's movement have permeated university life, and each time they are resorted to afresh, verbally if not physically, the university reacts as I once did: it acquiesces in the "foolishness" as a kind of temporary, temporizing measure, assuming that it will make no difference, even as it goes on making all the difference in the world.

YET suppose that even now, at this late date, one were to join the argument at last. What could one offer against those who are prepared to define womanhood as a "problem" capable of "solution," or to represent the female as a sex that has to be compensated for past injustices? How, for that matter, can one ask young people to assume, and enjoy, the differentiated responsibilities of men and women when each sex longs to prolong its androgynous childhood forever?

Our parents faced no such problem. When I was sixteen, I wanted to be a war correspondent or a trucker. I wanted to play boys' basketball, not girls'. I announced that I would never marry, never

* For a fascinating account of her later adventures in academe, see Edward Shils's article, "Remembering the 30's & 60's," in the May 1988 *New Criterion*.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

compromise my independence. My mother, who had been a rebel in a much more radical age than mine, responded simply, *"Bay yidn zaynen nishto kayn nones"*—"we Jews have no nuns." Thus she instructed me that celibacy even in its most exalted sublimations was not one of my options. I was expected to find a husband, to procreate, and to nurture a family. Nothing personal, just the law and the custom.

Humiliating as it was to be reduced to a formula—and trust my mother to find one that stung!—I think I was grateful even then for the utter certainty of her expectations. She *knew* what was good for me, and did not have to waste her breath on arguments. My protest, too, was the expected thing, the inevitable resistance to maturity—and to be dismissed as such. Three years later I was engaged to be married, and although my haste had other causes than these, I do not doubt that I have my mother as well as my husband to thank for my good fortune.

That firm voice of my mother's is hard to fake. The modern parent, duly attentive to social order *and* individual self-expression, aware of biological determinism *and* social conditioning, persuaded by the right to happiness in the here and now as well as by civilization's just demand that gratification be postponed, is not so well placed to be a firm guide. Midge Decter, who was the first to see that the problems of women today stem from freedom rather than oppression, has also written the book on what kind of guidance we liberal parents do manage to give our children, and with what sorry results. "You really don't have to get married if you don't want to," says the liberal parent to her daughter, "though you might regret it later if you don't. You should prepare for any career you like, including ones that have been traditionally closed to women, but on the other hand you might want to look for something that can be combined with family life, just in case you do decide to get married and have children. A war correspondent sounds like a terrifically important job, especially if you are one of the few who still believe that there are things worth fighting for, but what will you do with your babies in the bunker? As for trucking, it might make nursing difficult. Have you considered architecture or horticulture?"

And yet I wish I could assume my mother's authority because I know she was right. The infinite freedom and extended life span that middle-class women now enjoy has not fundamentally altered their biological or social priorities, because the period when women are maximally attractive and healthy and vigorous is still the same as it was, and not likely to change. The mysterious part of life—marriage and procreation—still requires the kind of foolhardy courage that is associated with youth; those who postpone and postpone until they are "ready" find that life is shorter than the time they need to prepare for it.

As for the social implications of the argument, since the biological differences between women and men suggest differentiated functions, any society that intends to maintain its balance does well to take its cue from the guidelines of nature. Happy is the woman whose husband is prepared to carry the economic burden of the family during at least her child-rearing years, and those who have enjoyed such protective blessings are nothing short of wicked when, explicitly or implicitly, they contrive to destroy the fragile contract that promotes them.

This issue of the protection of women reminds me that one of the first things the organized feminists did on our campus was to plaster on the inside of every cubicle in every women's toilet a sinister cartoon. Under the caption YOU MAY NOT BE ALONE, an oafish man leers over a toilet door. Beneath this piece of daintiness is a phone number, presumably of the women's movement office, though it would hardly matter because there are no phones in any of the bathrooms. Since this notice cannot be meant to frighten an intruder (being posted only on the inside of the door), nor offer his prospective victim any safety, its sole purpose is sadistic—to frighten the woman on the toilet, to confront her, each time she seeks this refuge, with the threat of the male sexual predator: just spread your legs and you are assaulted.

The assault comes not from any man, however, but from the sick mind of a movement that pretends to protect women from a danger it abets. Anyone worried about the thinness of the patina of civilization that covers our sexual appetites should be duly eager to preserve such domesticating institutions as exist, monogamy preeminent among them. If every man is a potential rapist, and every toilet stall his target, one would think women would do well to invent strategies of pacification, rather than these titillating goads to violence.

But the women who launched the movement did not initially weigh the predatory qualities of males at all. They had in mind their pacific middle-class fathers and husbands. It was only once they had embraced an ideology denying men their customary role of protectors that they felt exposed to danger, and from the protectors they had just dismissed. Demanding equality and liberation one minute, they screamed *Help! Rape!* the next. Only they were not the ones to suffer; the real damage fell not on the middle-class women who propelled the movement, but on the poor who had never asked for anything but protection from the men around them.

IN ALL candor, I should confess that in my career I have been superbly placed to profit from the women's movement. And although I've tried to be scrupulous in refusing proffered favors, I feel like a member of a Mafia family whose position in the clan wins him priv-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ileges and benefits whether he ever pulls the trigger or not. Once the blackmail bid went out for "the redress of historical imbalances," those under the gun could hardly be expected to discriminate between females with a grievance and those without. The hunt was on for WOMAN, and there I was.

A young man representing a large foundation calls to invite me to a conference. He explains the intellectual significance of the gathering, names some of the prominent speakers and their topics, outlines the special task that has been assigned to me. I am tempted, but not sufficiently to accept. The young man pleads: I alone can present the angle that is needed, I alone have the right qualifications. To allay both his anxieties and my conscience, I suggest the name of a superior alternative. There is brief silence on the line. "Well, frankly," says my champion, "we need another woman on the program."

I am offered a fine new job. At the interview I am assured of the cooperation I would be receiving from X, Y, and Z, the opportunities that would be mine, the institution's eagerness to have me in its employ. "We are doing everything possible to find qualified women," says my host, apparently unaware of his unspeakable rudeness. Qualified women might be what a whoremaster assembles for his stable, a potentate for his harem, but an educator for his university?

My pride is not the only thing at stake, though let me not sell it short, either. When I took up the study of literature to become a qualified professor, it never occurred to me that my sex should be *ir*relevant to my work, any more or less than my other defining characteristics—my age, my Jewishness, the level of my intelligence, my appearance, my personality, even my indeterminate "class." How could a process as intensely personal as being taught and teaching fail to admit the human properties of those involved? (When I first started to teach Yiddish literature I bought a chic new wardrobe because I was determined to alter through my own person the geriatric associations of the language.) But these personal qualities, duly admitted, were to be harnessed to the pursuit of knowledge and wisdom. Before the text, as before the law, as before God, we were all equal, competitively and cooperatively engaged in the same free inquiry.

You can ask for either equal treatment or for a handicap's compensation. By contriving to define me as a member of a handicapped species the women's movement has deprived me of my dignity and misrepresented my aims, as much as Farla did in our conversation of long ago. Part of the damage of this strategy is the reimposition of categorical discrimination in areas women (and men) had fought long and hard to liberate from such abuse, and an absurd attempt to "make up" to people of one age for the habits of another. More important, by playing the victim, women of the movement have ducked the problem actually confronting them, which is exactly the opposite of the one they lit upon.

There is no way of avoiding the anxiety that results from the vast opportunities middle-class women now enjoy. Anyone who has tried to balance one life as the mother of a family with another—either in tandem or in sequence—as an equal competitor in the workplace knows the wrenching difficulties involved. What made it easier for me, and for most women of my generation, was our certainty about the relative significance of these "roles," both in our own lives and in the social fabric, the absolute primacy of the first, the incidental importance of the second. We inherited this certainty, but most of us would go on to reconfirm it on the basis of our own experience.

Thanks to Farla and her like, and all who have come after her, this is no longer the case. Yet when I think of the children I have raised, and the home I have cradled, and the enmeshment of pleasure that has issued forth from these most primitive and exalted responsibilities, it seems to me utterly depraved to go weighing the privilege of motherhood on the scale of "power," or to go totting up the balance of so much motherhood versus so much professional or working life. I can only pray that my daughter and my prospective daughters-in-law, as well as all the female students I cherish and respect, will understand this, too, though the odds are against them in the ideologically poisoned atmosphere in which they have grown up, and what with the hesitation of mothers like me to clean it up.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A "New Racism" on Campus?

Thomas Short

CAMPUS racism is receiving national attention, but questions of fact and of interpretation make its reality problematic and also ensure that discussion of the subject will invariably become heated. Some believe that others are looking for a chance to make an issue out of racism; according to the latter, the former are blinded by their own unadmitted bigotry. There are complaints that minority activists and/or university administrations are overreacting; but others take complaints about overreaction to be further evidence of racist attitudes.

Certainly many of the incidents that have been recorded are ambiguous. Since one does not know by whom, neither does one know with what motive racist graffiti are produced. At Smith College some years ago, a black student defaced her own door with racial slurs, in order, she later confessed, to draw attention to racism. At Amherst College it turned out that a KKK-style cross-burning was perpetrated not by racist whites but by black students, also for the purpose of drawing attention to racism at the college.

Without doubt there have been some instances of racial violence, most famously the post-World Series brawl at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst in 1986. But not every fight between people of different races is a racial incident. And when racial animosity is involved, it is not always an animosity of whites toward blacks.

In March 1987, newspapers reported that at Columbia University in New York City a mob of white students had kicked and stomped a single black student and then went on a rampage shouting, "We're going to kill you fucking niggers." That story had been given to the press by a group of roughly a dozen students, calling themselves Concerned Black Students at Columbia (CBSC), who also distributed it in handbills in black neighborhoods in Harlem, Brooklyn, and Queens. But then the members of CBSC refused to testify at hearings held by the university, and their allegations were contradicted by 22 eyewitnesses. The truth, it now appears, is that the altercation began in personal animosity between one white and one black student, proceeded to a beating of that white student and three of his friends by seven blacks, not all of whom were students, and then to an unprovoked assault by blacks on another white student.

Most of the incidents cited as proving racism, however, do not involve violence, or even anonymous slurs, but mere "insensitivity." Thus at the University of Wisconsin at Madison, major concern about racism has been generated by incidents of which "the most blatant" was a fraternity's throwing a "Fiji Island" party which it advertised by placing a dark-skinned and nose-boned caricature on its front lawn. Now as it happens the choice of the Fiji Island theme was dictated largely by the Greek letters of the fraternity, which has long been known as "The Fee-Gee's." Nevertheless, the authorities at Wisconsin interpreted this event as indicating that racism is pervasive there, and authorities at many other institutions have interpreted comparable events in similar fashion.

THE problem of protesting "insensitivity" becomes more acute when the protest is not merely unconvincing but seems to be based on unjust demands.

Take, as an extreme instance, the Thernstrom case at Harvard. The Harvard Committee on Race Relations, created a year earlier, received a complaint in February 1988 that Stephan Thernstrom, Winthrop Professor of History, had exhibited "racial insensitivity" in a course he taught the preceding semester. These charges were made public in campus newspapers, including an article in the February 17 *Harvard Crimson* by one of the accusers, who happened also to be chairwoman of the Political Action Committee of the Black Students' Association. It was from such articles that Thernstrom himself (one of Harvard's leading liberal professors) first learned that charges had been brought against him. They appear to have been as follows: (1) Thernstrom used a book he had edited in which affirmative action was "incompletely defined as 'government enforcement of preferential treatment in hiring, promotion, and college admissions.' " This definition, which in any event seems reasonably accurate, was not

THOMAS SHORT, here making his first appearance in COMMENTARY, is associate professor of philosophy at Kenyon College. He is currently at work on a book about the politicization of higher education.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Thernstrom's but a contributing author's. (2) Thernstrom described the point of view of those who passed Jim Crow laws—their intention, for example, to suppress blacks whom they found to be "uppity." (3) Thernstrom read aloud from white plantation owners' journals "without also giving the slaves' point of view." And (4) Thernstrom presented the view, albeit not as his own, that black men leave their wives because they suffer feelings of inadequacy when black women enter the labor force.

Thernstrom was defended by many of his colleagues and, on grounds of academic freedom, by the dean of the faculty. But the dean of the college weighed in first, with a statement broadly condemning all "insensitivity," including insensitivity to the *unintended* "import" of one's words. Not surprisingly, Thernstrom commented that the kind of "ideological assault" to which he has been subjected discourages him and will discourage others from teaching courses on racial and ethnic issues.

Questions of racism have also upstaged other issues. When, for example, news leaked out at the University of Pennsylvania that a primarily Jewish fraternity's rush party featured two black strippers performing sexual acts on stage, there was an angry outcry of "racism" (and "sexism"), but little or no mention of lewdness. A major concern was whether any of the audience's comments were racial; duly inquiring, a faculty-student committee found no evidence of this. Even so, the director of Penn's Afro-American Studies program described the incident as "the tip of the iceberg relative to . . . racism at the university," and the fraternity received an eighteen-month suspension. Shortly thereafter, militant black students brought the anti-Semitic Louis Farrakhan to campus, as an "acid test" of whether blacks will be accepted "on equal terms."

A SECOND series of events, distinct from the incidents of racism (whether actual or only imagined) in reaction to which some but not all of them began, was this spring's swift sequence of rallies and marches and occupations of campus buildings, all by black students protesting racism. While expressing frustration with real or perceived prejudice, these demonstrations cannot be taken as further proof of racism. For it is largely the success of a protest on one campus that triggers another on another campus, as cooperative administrators grant protesters easy victories.

• At the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, at least 100 black students occupied New Africa House after five whites had been accused of beating two blacks. The five-day occupancy, however, followed the alleged beating by five days, during which time the university had already proceeded strongly by suspending two of the whites (two others withdrew voluntarily) and scheduling a disciplinary hearing. In spite of all this, the occupiers demanded "tougher prohibitions against racial harassment" as well as more minority students and faculty. Instead of refusing to dicker with those involved in the illegal seizure of property, Joseph D. Duffey, the chancellor, brought baskets of food to the students and agreed not only to the tougher prohibitions but also to accelerate renovation of New Africa House, to increase enrollment of minority students by 50 percent, and to "study" the creation of new classes on ethnic topics and the addition of ethnic foods to the cafeterias. He ended by thanking the occupiers "for reminding us of obligations we share as members of a community of learning."

• At Hampshire College, also in Amherst, 40 black students occupied an office for nine days, winning a sixteen-point agreement, including the appointment of a "dean of multicultural affairs" and an adviser for the group that occupied the office.

• At Penn State, after 89 students had been arrested for a fifteen-hour sit-in, President Bryce Jordan dropped charges against them. He did so on the ground that the students had been "motivated by a genuine belief that immediate action was required" (an excuse that would apply equally well to most terrorists and many war criminals). He also agreed to create the position of vice president for cultural affairs for black students.

• At Duke, when the Faculty Advisory Council rejected a proposal from the Committee on Black Faculty that each of Duke's more that 50 departments be "required" to hire at least one additional black faculty member by 1993, all eight members of the committee resigned. This evoked a supporting protest by students and faculty, "drawing as many as 500 of Duke's 5,284 students." The result was that the council reversed its decision, even though the dearth of black Ph.D.'s in many disciplines makes it unlikely that the requirement can be met.

• After a four-day occupation of the president's office at the University of Vermont, that official signed an agreement containing seventeen provisions such as this one: "In no case will the number of minorities hired [for faculty positions] be less than four each year." The agreement is doubly dubious, since the students with whom this contract was made represent no one but themselves and the president cannot be held to a promise that might require him to violate federal, state, and university statutes defining fair and non-discriminatory practices in hiring.

• At Williams College, a group of 14 black students (apparently inspired by the Vermont victory) barricaded themselves in a dean's office "to show the intensity of our feelings and the validity of our claims." The result was an agreement by the Williams College administration to review its affirmative-action program, to "support a divisional requirement" in minority studies, to con-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sider raising Afro-American Studies from a concentration to a major, to set up a multicultural center in consultation with various minority groups, and to establish four new scholarships for minority students.

II

THE charge that there is a "resurgent racism" on the American campus is made not only by student activists but also by many educators and civil-rights leaders who claim that racism "has been condoned by the Reagan administration," and that "in the last six or seven years, Reagan has made racism a more legitimate thing to do."

The way in which President Reagan is supposed to have "done" this is not often specified, since knowledge of his faults is taken for granted in most academic circles. But we get at least some notion of what the charge means from remarks by Ira Michael Heyman, chancellor of the University of California at Berkeley, and by the aforementioned Chancellor Duffey. Heyman admits that there have been few racist incidents at Berkeley, "but I perceive them to fit into the larger framework of the general mood in the U.S. that includes the blunting of affirmative-action programs at the national level." And Duffey explains the turmoil at Amherst on the grounds that the "white kids haven't grown up in a world where affirmative action is defended."

In other words, according to this view, opposition to race-based preferential treatment is both racist in itself and conducive to the spread of racism.

This expansive and tendentious redefinition would make racists out of the majority of the American people, who oppose preferential treatment as unfair and as a violation of the very principle of equality it is meant to serve. It is also what permits it to be said that racism is growing on the campus. For many of the allegedly racist incidents cited are actually protests against preferential treatment of minorities. Indeed, a slogan that has emerged on a number of campuses is, "Equal rights, not special rights."

Some who recognize the difference between hostility to blacks and opposition to preferential treatment have coined the term "new racism," defined as actions "aimed more at government or school programs that seem to help blacks at the expense of whites." But calling it "new" still does not make it racism. All it does is to delegitimize the traditional American principle of equality of opportunity and to replace it with the rival principle of equality of result. The difference between these two views, of course, is the difference between liberal democracy, wherein procedural order or rule by law is maintained, leaving results up to individual effort, and a controlled society, wherein a particular outcome for the whole society is specified and nothing that might be done to individuals in order to achieve that outcome is prohibited.

If opposition to affirmative action *is* racism, then only when affirmative action is vigorously pursued "can we honestly say that racism is being handled in a practical manner"—as a University of Michigan vice president declared at a conference at Northern Illinois University this past February, where more than 350 representatives of universities and colleges discussed the problem of racial bias.

At a similar conference at Wellesley College a month earlier, the representatives of more than 30 New England colleges and universities were urged to find ways of "Enhancing support for affirmative-action programs, including holding administrators and department heads accountable for carrying out the policies."

Holding department heads accountable is exactly what Duke has decided to do. Likewise Ohio State University, whose president, removing the last vestige of any ghost of a distinction between affirmative action and a quota system, "told the University Senate this fall [1987] that he is prepared to levy sanctions against units of the institution that fail to meet their goals in recruiting minority students and hiring women and minorities."

NOT ONLY with respect to affirmative action but in all other respects as well, college and university administrators—at the Wellesley conference, at the Northern Illinois conference, and in pronouncements otherwise publicized—have anticipated the agenda of the protesters. Long before black students demonstrated in protest, these administrators proclaimed the need for more support for minority organizations, more minority studies, required courses in minority studies for all students, and so on.

Hence we have a strange spectacle to contemplate: at the University of Vermont, Williams College, Smith College, the University of Massachusetts, and other places, activists have occupied buildings or marched in protest in order to "coerce" administrators into doing what the latter had previously gone on record as proposing to do.

For example, Lattie F. Coor, president of the University of Vermont, has written that he had already presented a plan "calling for the doubling of the undergraduate minority student body and the minority faculty over the next four years, and calling for steps to make significant increases in the presence of courses dealing with ethnic studies and the minority experience," when, after an extended series of meetings with minority students, they took possession of his office. Then, as President Coor delicately expresses it, "When it became clear that the minority students with whom I had been discussing these issues wished

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to pursue negotiations in the context of occupied offices . . ., I agreed to enter negotiation with them. . . ." He points out that the students' occupation of his office violated university policy, but he decided not to enforce that policy because ". . . we'd had the issues under discussion for some time and even though I think we were in substantial agreement as to the general goals, the process was taking more time than many in the minority community believed appropriate."

Much the same charade of intimidation was staged at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst and Smith College. Administrators from both institutions were reported in the national press to have recommended (at the Wellesley conference) these antidotes to racism: "Renewed commitment to affirmative action and curriculum revisions," including "building into the curriculum multicultural courses." That was on January 23. Twenty days later black students occupied a building at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst and "won" those very same commitments as concessions. It took two months more for the Smith students to swing into action—but only after Mary Maples Dunn, Smith's president, had been quoted in the New York *Times* as saying, "Academic institutions are being pushed by the young to put social justice and respect back on a high priority." The students having thus been invited to do so, they marched on President Dunn's house in "protest" against the slowness of Smith to combat racism.

It is hard to avoid the conclusion that black students are being used by some administrators to bludgeon their faculties, trustees, and the public into unthinking support for policies upon which those administrators have already decided.

Allegedly racist incidents serve the same purpose. When Donna Shalala was made chancellor of the Madison campus of the University of Wisconsin, well before the Fiji Island party incident, she brought with her an ambitious plan by which the school could "address racism." When the Fiji incident occurred, her administration played it up—notably, in their publications for alumni—as evidence of racial crisis and as reason to implement the provisions of Chancellor Shalala's plan.

YET the question arises: if the purpose of such plans and policies is to combat racism, why is it that racial tension is at its height precisely in those institutions in which they have been most extensively adopted?

The best known and probably the worst incident was the abovementioned brawl at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. In the preface to his report on this incident—a report commissioned by Chancellor Duffey—a member of the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination waxed enthusiastic over all that "UMASS" had already done to overcome racism:

> . . . this is the same UMASS that has an Afro-American Studies Department with degree programs and tenured black faculty, including the chairman. It is the same UMASS that has a special academic counseling program for its black students. . . . It is the same UMASS that in the face of much criticism hosted the leader of Zimbabwe . . . that has a large Afro-American facility to house black programs, a funded Third World organization and an active black student recruitment program. It is the same UMASS that leads many in the country in a movement toward a genuinely pluralistic campus.

It is the same UMASS at which ten students, two black, eight white, were injured in a race riot.

Some educators are aware that their proposals will increase, not decrease, racial tensions, but they have a ready justification for pursuing them anyway. Thus Chancellor Heyman of Berkeley has said that "these unfortunate racial incidents are a mark of progress. It is what happens in the parade toward our objectives, which is a place that is not color conscious."

Admittedly, while a disease is being cured, its symptoms will sometimes intensify. Therefore, if white hostility were a product simply of increased numbers of blacks on campus, we could hope that in time familiarity would breed tolerance.

Yet there is no evidence to indicate that white hostility is due to increased black presence as such. All the evidence indicates that it is due to preferential treatment of blacks and to the conditions of racial separation that exist on campus. According to one report, "On most campuses, from fraternities to the cafeterias to informal study groups, students live largely segregated lives. There is general agreement . . . that the practice, which mirrors society at large, is at the root of campus racial problems." But despite what educators would have us believe, society at large is not the sole or perhaps even the primary culprit. Although the number of blacks attending predominantly white schools was smaller in the 50's and early 60's than it is now, integration was a fact of life at schools outside the South until, in the late 60's and early 70's, liberal educators acquiesced in the demands of black militants and separatists. It was this acquiescence in racial separation, both curricular and extracurricular, and not separateness in society at large, which produced the current racial polarization on campuses. More of it will only make things worse.

III

WHAT we are observing here, then, is a nationwide movement in higher education which goes well beyond the original idea of affirmative action, that in order to reverse the legacy of racial discrimination it is necessary to make special efforts to bring blacks into higher

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

education. It goes well beyond the idea—indeed, it negates the idea—that the higher education from which others have benefited should now be extended to all minorities. Instead, this movement, the goal of which is often described as "cultural diversity" or as "multicultural education," argues that blacks and certain other minority groups represent cultures distinct from the culture of the majority, that these minority cultures must be added to the curriculum, and that justice will not be obtained until all students are made to appreciate the plurality of cultures.

From this it follows that along with the introduction of minority students we must have minority studies (otherwise called ethnic studies or multicultural studies), so that minority students will not be "denied their culture," and so that other students will learn to understand people "culturally different" from themselves. It follows too that minority faculty are to be sought in order to teach minority studies and as exemplars of minority cultures, much as native speakers are the preferred teachers of foreign languages. And, finally, it follows that separate organizations and facilities for minority students are not only natural but should receive institutional support. Whereas it was once considered racist to bar blacks from a liberal eduation or to offer them separate facilities, it is now considered racist to "impose" that curriculum on them or to deny them separate facilities.

If the traditional liberal-arts curriculum "excludes" minority cultures, it must represent a peculiar culture possessed by the majority or some dominant minority. Hence, that curriculum is variously identified as Western or Eurocentric or even as the culture of white male capitalist heterosexual patriarchy. And hence too we have the demand, for example at Stanford University, to "balance" the curriculum by adding courses and materials relating to women, to minorities, and to other cultures and civilizations.

THE institution of minority studies is the key proposal in the "cultural diversity" movement. For it rests on, it enshrines, and it teaches the dogma of cultural separateness on which all the rest depends. This dogma incorporates the double lie that American minorities have a culture essentially different from that of other Americans and that Western civilization and the liberal-arts tradition "exclude" women and minorities. It would reinforce this mistaken sense of exclusion by relegating the genuine contributions of minorities and women to curricular ghettos.

Moreover, the cry of cultural diversity is a sham. No one is urging courses in Irish Catholic studies, Greek American studies, and so on. The groups singled out do not even include Jews: the minorities selected—blacks, Hispanics, American Indians, and Asian Americans—are those who, with the possible exception of the last-mentioned, are or are supposed to be oppressed in contemporary American society. "Cultural diversity" thus fronts for a presumed distinction between the oppressors and the oppressed. It is meant to give an academic gloss to an implied power struggle and to organize the academy on a political basis without seeming to do so.

The dogma of cultural separateness purports to be a deep account of racial prejudice as rooted in Western culture itself. In this way it will in fact heighten mutual suspicion and hostility among Americans of different races and ethnic backgrounds. It rationalizes the existence of separate organizations for minority students, providing a training ground for leaders of minority political movements and turning the academy into a forcing-house of racial politics.

Black studies ("specializing," as Thomas Sowell could already see in 1972, "in ideology and sociopolitical conditioning rather than education") was the foot politics stuck in the schoolhouse door, soon followed by radical feminism and much else that, in the guise of educating, advocates. No wonder those who wish to push advocacy a step further belabor the problem of racism and mobilize minority militants to demand a yet more politicized curriculum: it worked so well the first time.

Indeed, the tenured veterans of the New Left of the 60's, who now dominate the liberal-arts faculties of our colleges and universities, and their supporters in the administrative bureaucracies of those same institutions, do not want minorities to enter the American mainstream, and they are not about to help them do so. On the contrary, they are using minorities as a weapon in their struggle to change the mainstream. If there is a "new racism" on American campuses, that is it.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Eyewitness in Gaza

Louis Rapoport

THIS past May, I rode in the back of a small open jeep as Roni, the captain of our Company A, roared down a sandy side street in pestilential Jebaliya, pursuing a mob of stone-throwers. He tore through a twenty-yard-long putrid-smelling puddle in this rat-infested Gaza refugee camp where the Palestinian uprising, the so-called *intifada,* began.

Jebaliya is a teeming hellhole, generally regarded as the most violent and nightmarish place of the Israel-occupied territories. Spent silver gas candles and black gas grenades and Palestinian and Islamic flags and black mourning banners and assorted junk tied with string to a rock had been lobbed up to the electric and telephone wires and dangled above the streets—the voodoo look is cultivated, and adds to the ominous atmosphere. The jeep parted the waters of the big puddle, splashing both sides of the shantytown street; and it all came back down on us. Pure liquefied shit—open sewage—and we were covered in it. It seemed to be a perfect commentary. It was also the only time I had ever seen our captain, a grim young ex-paratrooper, crack a smile.

Certainly, there had not been much to laugh about since the first day Company A moved into the fortified post (I called it "Fort Apache") in the center of this densely populated square mile—60,000 people, about six to a room. The first day, two Palestinians were killed as we were attacked by frenzied mobs whipped up by Muslim fundamentalists and PLO nationalists alike. The "natives" test each new reserve unit immediately upon its arrival, and our somewhat panicky reactions were duly noted. They could see that some of our company—the potbellied men pushing forty or even fifty—were not like the paratrooper reservists we were replacing. Stones and rocks were raining down on us, and it was sometimes truly terrifying.

"Ya Maniac!" the Arabs yelled at the soldiers looking out from Fort Apache. "If you're a man, come out here without your gun," one said in fluent Hebrew—40 percent of Gaza's men commute to work in Israel. Taunting is constant, though no Israeli seems to take it personally, and words are not what bring the soldiers out—the officers respond only to the erection of burning barricades across the roads, or large groups of youths stoning Israeli vehicles. The defiant youths encourage the chase, the cat-and-mouse game. They have laid traps all around—on one occasion, a bomb had been planted awaiting the arrival of our patrol.

Our adobe-like fort is really just a police post. It was manned by four soldiers and a few policemen on the December day in 1987 when the *intifada* began, right here, after four local people were killed in an auto accident at the Jebaliya intersection near the entrance to the village and camp area and three miles from Gaza city. The rumor swept the camp that the Israelis had murdered the four. That falsehood, along with the successful attack on an army post in the north a week earlier by a single Palestinian glider pilot, is what triggered the uprising.

The scores of men in the reserve company I serve with, and the hundreds of men in our battalion, and the dozens of paratrooper, border police, and other regular-army units who also patrol Jebaliya, are portrayed by the media—within Israel and throughout the world—as part of the Goliath machine versus little David with his puny stones (even the great biblical king becomes a Palestinian in the continuing and relentless cooptation of Jewish history). In addition to being seen as David vs. Goliath, the Palestinians are called protesters, and likened to the followers of Martin Luther King and Gandhi, or the peaceful Russian peasants who marched on the czar's Winter Palace. We Israelis are cast as the Nazis, shooting out the eyes of nine-month-old babies.

The truth is that with a number of exceptions Israeli soldiers are typically restrained and decent men under attack by people who openly yell not "We Shall Overcome" but "Death to the Jews" and who punctuate their chants by throwing Molotov cocktails and pipe bombs and lethal building blocks from the roofs. (Our battalion has had 25 injuries, four men hospitalized, but such information is rarely mentioned in media reports.)

IN Gaza I saw with my own eyes (and through powerful binoculars) how grown Arab men send children to the "front," pulling the strings from behind, quite willing to sacrifice others, knowing that the nine-month-old baby who is wounded by a rubber bullet will make headlines around the world, and that no one will question the responsibility of the infant's mother, or of the Palestinians who actually invite such incidents. No one will mention the hysterical religious fanatics in the refugee-camp schools who preach holy war and suicide—martyrdom.

The founder of the Arab Legion, Sir John Glubb, writing about

LOUIS RAPOPORT *is a free-lance writer who lives in Jerusalem. His two forthcoming books are* Forty: Israel at the Crossroads *and* Shake Heaven and Earth: Peter Bergson and the Struggle to Save European Jews. *He is currently working on a book about the "Doctors' Plot" and the last days of Stalin.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

events in the 1950's, noted in his book, *A Soldier of the Arabs*:

> When the schoolmasters received the word from the extremist politicians, they turned all the children into the streets. On some occasions, the teachers had written on pieces of paper the slogans which the children were to call out. A mass of children, shouting and singing, waving flags and throwing stones, blocked the traffic. It was difficult for the [Jordanian] police to disperse the crowds of big girls or even little boys and girls. . . . When confusion had been created, the roughs took over the riot.

The method, over thirty years later, remains the same.

The mother of one of the two nine-month-old babies who lost eyes in two separate incidents in Jebaliya in late May and early June 1988 proudly announced to the press that her daughter would become "the Moshe Dayan of the Palestinian revolution." One Jebaliya father told us frankly that he was prepared to sacrifice a couple of his nine children because there "is no other hope," and the PLO will compensate all martyrs.

As for the soldiers in our company, many of them felt that their hands were tied. They were warned that they would face imprisonment if they used live ammunition against stone-throwers in any but a life-or-death situation. Even the use of rubber bullets and tear gas was strictly controlled, though there were cases when a newcomer to a patrol failed to hear that day's orders, or someone loosely interpreted the "immediate danger to life" rule. Accidents happened, or misjudgments—as when tear gas was fired into a closed housing compound. One of our men, an ex-convict from Russia (*not* a refusenik or "prisoner of Zion" type), fashioned a Molotov cocktail of his own, and might have thrown it if an officer hadn't heard about it and taken it away from him. But I doubt whether any other army in the world, or police force, would act with more restraint than the Israelis have done: the figure of fewer than 200 Arab fatalities in six months of a widespread violent uprising is amazingly low.

In Jebaliya, stronghold of a Khomeini-like Muslim fundamentalist revolution, I did witness some instances of Israeli brutality during my month of duty, which coincided with Ramadan (when Muslims fast during daylight hours). But the worst beatings I saw were by Palestinian militants of their own people—for example, the face of an old man (a "collaborator" because he tried to stop his children from stoning soldiers) had been pummeled into bloody hamburger by the young men who were staging the daily disturbances. With the aid of one of his sons, he called to us for help. "The Jews are better than our own people," he cried bitterly to his son. "You throw stones at them, but it wasn't Jews who did this to me."

I also saw several of our soldiers stop hot-headed fellow Israelis from hitting bound and blindfolded prisoners. The kibbutzniks were the best about this—they simply would not allow it. The worst incident I witnessed was when a strapping corporal with a sadistic grin threw a blindfolded, bound prisoner into the grill of a truck parked just outside the Ansar 2 prison compound in Gaza. But even that was not so bad—during the Vietnam war I myself experienced a worse beating by San Francisco police for simply being in the vicinity of a peaceful demonstration (by people who were demanding an end to war, and who were not throwing bombs or big rocks).

AND so here I find myself—a past supporter of Journalists for Amnesty International, an anti-Vietnam war activist of the 1960's, and a present supporter in Israel of a political solution based on territorial compromise—condoning a certain amount of beating.

During one week in the middle of my 30-day service in Jebaliya, our security forces, backed by the army, rounded up three different terrorist cells in and around nearby Gaza city. These 20 or so men had automatic rifles, grenades, and explosives. Although on one occasion they had carried out a mission against an Israeli patrol, all their other actions had been directed against Israeli civilians, bombing a city bus in Rishon le-Zion, for example. Now one of these groups was about to launch a suicide human-bomb attack on the throngs of people at the Tel Aviv Central Bus Station. Hundreds of lives might have been lost if the Israeli security forces had not managed to press the arrested men to reveal the terrorist plot.

I found that many of the left-wing or Left-Center reservists in my unit, who believe as I do that we must arrive at a territorial compromise with the Palestinians, had no "psychological problems" about arresting suspects or pursuing people whose aim is to kill or maim as many Israelis as possible. Yet one reads constantly in the Israeli media, with its Left-liberal slant, that many Israeli psychologists are alarmed about the growing risks to the country's mental health, that it is not the same army it used to be, that its actions are "inhuman." In contrast, one simply never sees praise for the army, for the average soldier or reservist who is doing what has to be done. It is all terribly distorted by people—whether journalists or psychologists—who do not mind stretching the truth in order to get their political views across.

INDEED, all of us in Company A—Left, Right, and Center—were astonished at the difference between what we saw at first hand, and what the media were telling us about it. I was the only writer-journalist among the men, who, as in any reserve company, came from all walks of life. But we all felt that the media distortions were immense, and that they were as sinister as the worst instances of very real Israeli abuses (such as the now-famous incident of four soldiers beating two detainees, filmed by Israeli CBS cameramen).

On our last day of service, the colonel in charge of our battalion and three others in Gaza ranted against the Israeli media. He told us how they cut and distorted, and he cited examples of Israeli journalists who tapped into the army internal network radio for their scoops, or who impersonated army officers in order to obtain information from secretaries at military

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

headquarters in Gaza. Many of the reservists—leftist and rightist alike—nodded in agreement with the commander.

Similarly, when Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin was asked by an Israeli radio reporter about the wounding of the first nine-month-old baby, a group of our soldiers at Fort Apache listening to the broadcast moaned in unison at the reporter's loaded question, at his obvious attempt to bait or embarrass Rabin: "Doesn't this incident show the inappropriateness and danger of using rubber bullets against the civilian population?" Rabin, accustomed to this kind of questioning, answered simply that he thought non-lethal weapons were preferable to live bullets.

THE problem arises from the fact that the media are part of an Israeli Labor-oriented establishment that shares the view of other establishments in the West and in the Eastern bloc and in the Third World who want Israel to withdraw in favor of an autonomous Palestinian entity if not a state. (I am one of the minority within this majority of journalists, favoring the Allon plan which involves returning no more than 60 percent of the West Bank to the Arabs.)

These journalists are political animals who put their stamp on every sentence they submit about the territories. They are the ones who shoot the footage for American TV, work as stringers for all the major newspapers in the world, and often provide most of the story an American or a Norwegian reads under the byline of a well-known American or Norwegian reporter. One rabid Peace Now supporter (nicknamed "The Snake" by some of those who work under him) is in charge of a news-service bureau, manages the news of a major Israeli daily, is the representative of a large Canadian newspaper and an English Sunday newspaper, and is a favorite commentator for the BBC, CBC, and ABC (such is life in Israel—everyone needs at least two incomes). No one says anything about possible conflict of interest, or monopoly. Nor is he shy about getting his opinions across.

Twenty-one Israelis have refused to serve in the army reserves in the territories. One of them is assistant managing editor of a major daily newspaper (he selects the stories that go on page one, oversees the headline writers, fashions the story in a way he sees fit). Yet his newspaper, which ran a long, very favorable magazine piece about the group of 21, mentioning some of their leaders, never reported that he was among them, or that he had spent thirty days in prison rather than serve in Gaza.

A reporter who covers the West Bank for Israel Television—a very decent man who, like all of his predecessors, eventually arrived at the position that Israel must withdraw immediately from the territories—greeted the news that I was going to serve in Jebaliya with the comment: "So you're going to beat up Arabs?" He happens to be one of the more balanced journalists—and there are others like him who have done an important job in covering the *intifada*, and revealing Israeli abuses along with Palestinian ones. But the impression they convey of a once-noble Israeli army turned into brutalizers of children and freedom fighters is simply false.

As for foreign journalists, of the 800(!) covering the Palestinian uprising, practically all of them also believe the Palestinians deserve support as underdogs searching for national identity and deprived of many basic human rights.

The Washington *Post* has already run 300,000 words about the *intifada*. One cannot help contrasting this with 1942, when the paper totally ignored the systematic extermination of millions of Jews—in November of that year, Rabbi Stephen Wise's press conference confirming State Department findings of two million Jews systematically murdered rated about four inches on the inside pages of both the New York *Times* and the *Post*.

Thus, the foreign reporters and the Israeli media form a community of interest, and they are constantly rubbing each other's backs, financially as well as politically. Some of them, like the novelist David Grossman, are eloquent, and the *New Yorker* will rush to publish their work (that famous magazine also published the lengthy "Reflections" of Jacobo Timerman after he had spent all of twenty-four hours in Lebanon shortly after the 1982 Israeli invasion). Grossman's book, *The Yellow Wind*, is sympathetic to and understanding of the Palestinians; such a book from the other side, by a Palestinian writer/reporter attempting to understand the Israelis, is all but inconceivable.

ONE of the many "bleeding heart" reporters in Israel is a very solid young American who unfortunately knows or cares little about the background of the Israel-Arab conflict. He believes that the root of the whole problem is Israel's presence in the territories, and that if the troops would only refrain from responding to every tire-burning and barricade, and withdraw to the periphery, the casualty rate, at least, would go down to a more acceptable level. In Jebaliya, I found that there was constant debate among the soldiers, and the officers, about this point. But the view that prevailed, and to which I now subscribe, is that there can be no "withdrawal" in the face of violence—every incident must be responded to, or there will be ten more such incidents within minutes.

Furthermore, there are large numbers of Palestinians who might pay lip-service to the uprising but who want to live under Israeli sovereignty, and who know that a Lebanon-style bloodbath will be the first fruit of a Palestinian state. I watched small Jebaliya children stoning cars with local Gaza license plates and demanding "protection money" from the drivers, who eventually chased them away and cleared the road of this peanut-sized version of the revolutionists we frequently faced.

These territories were the price paid by the Arabs for their constant war against Israel. Should the territories now be conceded because the Arabs are burning tires, or burning down forests in Israel proper, or because they have become darlings of the world media? Or perhaps because of an increased willingness among Palestinians to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

die for their cause? But what is that cause? The New York *Times* may think that the name "Abu Jihad" (the *nom de guerre* of Khalil al-Wazir, Arafat's top deputy, who was recently assassinated, apparently by Israeli agents) means "Father of the Struggle." But everyone in the Middle East knows that *jihad* means not "struggle," but "holy war," and that a "holy war" against the entire Jewish state is what many Arabs believe they are engaged in.

A GOOD friend of mine, when he heard that I would be going to the Gaza Strip for my spell of reserve duty, said, "Of course, be careful; but try also to take a very close look at what is happening there. Open your eyes. Open your third eye."

Eyes, or the lack of them, are automatically associated with Gaza. The Philistines took Samson there, putting out his eyes and binding him with fetters of brass and placing him in the prison house to work. Blind John Milton, in *Samson Agonistes*, wrote about the Israelite judge being "Eyeless in Gaza, at the mill with slaves." The ancient rabbis said that the eyes are the agents of sin; Samson's eyes had lusted for Philistine women. Samson took vengeance for his eyes, slaying thousands when he brought the house down on the Philistine lords and himself. The Palestinians are now vowing to take vengeance for their own lost eyes. Many commentators have said that modern Israel suffers from a "Samson complex" rather than a "Masada complex," that it will end up destroying itself along with its Arab enemies.

My own feeling is that places like Jebaliya are festering wounds that must be eliminated. For years, the PLO resisted any change in the status of the refugee-camp inmates—when a new neighborhood of well-built homes was erected alongside Shati refugee camp in Gaza (a place second only to Jebaliya in horribleness), the refugees, or rather their leaders, refused to budge. These miserable camps are a hothouse of insurrection, and the PLO wants them there until Jerusalem and Jaffa are "liberated." If I had my way, the camp would be bulldozed, and its residents sent to nearby Gaza city or a few miles away to the West Bank. Samson tore out the Gate of Gaza and carried it on his shoulders for forty miles to Hebron—why not now? Because it would be called "transfer," or "a second Lidice."

There are so many myths about Gaza—in a 1971 PLO booklet, Gaza's 140 square miles with a population (at that time) of 450,000 was termed one of the most overcrowded places on earth. What about Los Angeles, or Mexico City, or Tokyo? They, and a thousand other cities, all have a much higher population density. Yet just about every journalist repeats this ridiculous claim. What *is* true is that the Jebaliya and Shati camps are desperately overcrowded—though, again, I have visited refugee camps in Sudan, such as Wad Kali, which are *twice* as densely populated as Jebaliya.

In any case, Jebaliya has become, for the Palestinians, the symbol, the very essence, of the *intifada*. That is why I think it may yet become the site of some horrible climax to the passion play which has now passed its half-year mark. But in the meantime those Palestinians who a few months ago beamed with the glow of victory and revolution in the streets, now know that Israelis are going to be more hard-nosed than ever about making territorial concessions, and that the *intifada* is being slowly but surely suppressed. The Palestinian euphoria is over. And some of the myths about the uprising's moral and political costs to Israel are also dissipating.

THE Israeli army chief of staff, Dan Shomron, announced a few months ago that every able-bodied Israeli male between the ages of twenty-two and fifty would be spending 62 days in the army reserves this year, instead of the usual 35-40 days, and that this was the cost of holding on to the territories. My own feeling at the time was that this would swell the number of Israelis voting for Labor, the party willing to "trade land for peace." What I found in Gaza was that none of the soldiers, even after 30 days of being "up against the shit of Jebaliya," had changed their political views, but that all were prepared to do what must be done to break the *intifada*.

The spirit among the men of this battalion, whose average age was about thirty-five, had not been higher in years. Our three young lieutenants, who ranged from an extremely cautious man to a slightly reckless daredevil, were all superb: honest, straight, courageous, tough but compassionate, businesslike. When I thought of the newspaper articles I read about the "psychological traumas" affecting just about every soldier in the army and the "dangerous consequences of the renewed violence" to Israeli society, it seemed to me that as compared with those psychologists and journalists, we much-abused and supposedly unhinged soldiers, splashing through puddles of excrement, were the real models of sanity and balance.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Robert Nisbet's America

Mary Tedeschi Eberstadt

WHEN a conservative thinker of Robert Nisbet's stature surveys the American scene only to find "a deeply flawed giant; not yet moribund but ill-gaited, shambling, and spastic of limb, often aberrant of mind," his claims to our attention are several. As a preeminent scholar, sociologist, and historian of ideas, Nisbet has been a mainstay of American intellectual life for decades. From his authoritative works on sociology to his landmark volume of 1980, *The History of the Idea of Progress*, to his masterfully playful *Prejudices: A Philosophical Dictionary* (1983), he has continually enriched his chosen disciplines. Yet Nisbet's importance does not rest only on his scholarly accomplishments, varied and distinguished though they are. For he is also a figure rarely seen on the intellectual or academic landscape, a scholar as concerned with illuminating his own time and place as he is with the past itself.

That much is obvious from Nisbet's many contributions to more immediate debates. *Tradition and Revolt*, a collection of essays published in 1968, sounds many of the themes that have occupied his shorter works over the years: the search for community against the fragmenting force of modernity; the growth of state power, particularly in the years since World War I; the alienation of individuals in an age when the bonds of family and tradition have loosened; the tensions between tradition and modernity in the American university. The "agony of the universities" has in fact concerned him especially, and in 1971 became the premise for his book, *The Degradation of the Academic Dogma*. More recently, Nisbet has turned his attention to the larger questions of politics, as in his 1985 chronicle, *Conservatism: Dream and Reality*.

Many of the themes pursued in these various works are now distilled in *The Present Age: Progress and Anarchy in Modern America*, a much expanded version of his 1988 Jefferson Lecture in the Humanities.* Yet while readers may find themselves on familiar ground with many of this new book's concerns, they may also find much in it to take them by surprise. As his recent study of conservatism suggests, Nisbet's dissatisfaction with the American social and political scene has grown increasingly acute. In *The Present Age*, he appears to have reached the sharpest verdict yet on the fortunes—or more precisely, the misfortunes—of American modernity.

AS ONE would expect from Robert Nisbet, *The Present Age* is an erudite, engaging, and beautifully argued piece of work. Its subtitle, however, is somewhat misleading; there is little mention of progress in Nisbet's pages, and what does appear is only incidental to his argument.

To be sure, as he acknowledges, health in the 20th century has improved by leaps and bounds; whole diseases have been swept away; more American families "are living well than at any prior moment in American history." Invention and discovery have likewise reached unaccustomed heights, propelled there in part by the demands of modern warfare. As elsewhere in Nisbet's works, however, such material accomplishments cannot compete with his larger interest in the condition of the American spirit. In this realm, he argues, sickliness and corruption abound.

Nisbet opens his case by spiriting the Framers to the present and imagining the United States through their eyes. What, he asks, would surprise them most about the shape of the modern republic? His first chapter suggests that it would be "the prevalence of war" in everyday life since the events of 1914. Two world wars and a rash of smaller conflicts later, the United States remains mired in an era of strife—indeed, "a virtual Seventy-Five Years' War"—unprecedented in American history.

The price paid for this transition to modernity has been a heavy one, in Nisbet's view. The costs of foreign and military policy have surpassed $300 billion a year. American troops are "deployed all over the world," and even where they are not, "a vast array" of weapons has been installed in their place. The "spirit as well as the substance" of the military now extends to most areas of American life. Most alarming is the foreign policy that the American military has been harnessed to serve. For the United States itself has become an imperial power, an "empire," Nisbet argues, that "would shock the Framers to their bones."

Nor would they feel relieved, he continues, by the claim that external aggressions had forced the United States into its sorry condition. The cold war and the Soviet aggrandizement that created it may warrant "respectful consideration," but they "do not explain either the size or the type of military establishment we now have on our hands." Instead, Nisbet finds the roots of imperial America within American borders.

There is, for one thing, the "military-industrial complex" of Eisenhower's farewell address. This subject has long occupied Nisbet, who has written elsewhere about the deleterious effects of government and industry on the university. In *The Present Age*, however, he stands this concern on its head. The symbiosis between the univer-

MARY TEDESCHI EBERSTADT, *whose article, "Arms Control & Its Casualties," appeared in our April issue, is a visiting fellow at the* National Interest *magazine.*

* Harper & Row, 136 pp., $17.95.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sities and the armaments and defense industries has produced a "complex, possibly deep pattern of culture" in which whole segments of the American elite—businessmen, researchers, scholars, intellectuals—have come to share an interest in the prevalence of war. Thus, "even if there were no Soviet Union or its equivalent," our own "internal dynamic" of interests would guarantee a martial element out of all proportion to what the Framers envisioned.

A second source of the "monstrous" American military establishment, Nisbet argues, is the age-old American moralism enshrined under Woodrow Wilson as a principle of statesmanship. It was Wilson who bequeathed to foreign policy the dictum that (as his own biographer Lord Devlin put it) "what America touches, she makes holy." The list of failures that Nisbet ascribes to this grandiose axiom is a long one. It includes the losses at Yalta, with their origins in FDR's denigration of our "imperial" allies and his reformer's zeal for Stalin; the defeat in Vietnam brought on by Kennedy's pledge, subsequently revoked, to "pay any price" and "bear any burden" in defense of American universalism; and the example of South Africa today, where American policy, in the author's eyes, has succumbed to a near-hysterical fever of misguided conscience.

Nor, it appears, are contemporary liberals the only heirs to Wilson's apocalyptic moralism. The author finds successors on the Right as well, particularly among conservatives obsessed with "world Communism." This concern has been with Nisbet for some time.* Yet, as his two most recent books suggest, the anti-Communism of yesterday is not nearly so alarming to Nisbet as the conservatism of the 1980's. In Ronald Reagan he finds "the devoutest successor thus far to Wilsonianism as interpreted by Roosevelt," a President whose foreign policy has embroiled the nation in an ever-mounting number of conflicts. Grenada, Lebanon, Nicaragua, the Persian Gulf—these and other flashpoints are entered in *The Present Age* as evidence of latter-day American ambitions. Indeed, so serious has the new Wilsonianism become that Nisbet is now led to warn that "no nation in history has ever managed permanent war and a permanent military Leviathan at its heart and been able to main a truly representative character."

NISBET'S second chapter, "The New Absolutism," follows the trail of government intrusion into the more pedestrian corners of life. Just as the military establishment has compromised the self-government upheld by the Framers, so too has the federal government crept, "cradle to grave," into the lives of ordinary citizens.

Nisbet's account of the ills wrought by federal power and intervention since World War I is a familiar one. Under "democratic absolutism," the political power of towns and states has shrunk to unprecedentedly small proportions. National control over the classroom, first justified as a necessity of war, has hardly dissipated; under ever-more sweeping decisions of the Supreme Court, it has in fact increased. The social-welfare bureaucracy, likewise born of war production, now "covers the country like a blanket and does not . . . hesitate to intrude into the most intimate details of our economic and social lives." Over these and other compromises of constitutional liberty looms the modern Supreme Court, "the single most glittering prize" to be had for social reformers grown impatient with the more cumbersome procedures of the legislature.

To these charges Nisbet adds a more unexpected fillip: the "relentless march of royalism" not only in the federal government at large, but in the executive branch above all. The "dream of a strong, active, robust, commanding President that included more than a touch of plebiscitary democracy," he charges, has lived on throughout the succession of Presidents beginning with FDR. Even Wilson, Nisbet observes, would not have dared, or perhaps even have wanted, the grand prerogatives claimed by FDR and his successors. He enters as evidence the "incessant imaging of the President" for the public, the "palace intrigues" more reminiscent of a court than of an elected government, the staff retainers "dedicated to protection of the royal presence," even the grandeur of the White House itself, "never more resplendent before as under the Reagans."

Such touches are emblematic, in Nisbet's judgment, of the "hypertrophy" of presidential power that commenced with FDR. Even Churchill reported regularly to Parliament and the War Cabinet throughout World War II; modern Presidents, by contrast, have been nearly unanimous in their efforts to shield their initiatives from Congress and to denigrate the expertise of advisers who might object to a chosen course. Then there are the smaller transgressions wrought by the power-hungry executive. "Government by deception," writes Nisbet, "by flat lying, grows apace"—a charge reviewed in excruciating detail, from Roosevelt's wartime whitewashing of Stalin to Johnson's (alleged) deception over the Tonkin Gulf, "the biggest lie yet to come from the President of the United States."

Worst of all, however, is the continuing resort to national security, "that ancient refuge of despotic monarchs," as a cover for controversial or illegal executive actions. Into that category fall Nixon and the Watergate affair, and, more prominently, the "Poindexter-North intrigue," which was "possibly even a small coup d'état"; the very idea of a National Security Adviser reminds Nisbet of "everything the Fathers of the Constitution loathed and abominated in the Old World."

IF THE harshness Nisbet brings to these charges is new, his analysis of their intellectual origins is not. He devotes several pages here to the writings of Rousseau, a subject he has returned to frequently since an essay on "Rousseau and Totalitarianism" in 1943. It was Rousseau, he writes in *The Present Age*, who first transferred "grace from the body of the church to the body of

* See his essay, "Foreign Policy and the American Mind," COMMENTARY, September 1961.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the state," thus pointing the way to the corruptions of the 20th century. Nisbet finds Rousseau's intellectual heirs everywhere, from the champions of "national community" and the "managerial state" earlier in the century to the intellectuals of today, who seek federally-imposed solutions for everything from child molesting to housing to AIDS. For Left and Right, Nisbet argues, "Rousseau is the man of the hour at this critical juncture in American political thought."

If there is an antidote to the "democratic absolutism" that the author deplores, it does not appear in his pages. Popular backlash would appear unlikely: the animosity toward bureaucracy began to retreat "once the American middle class became a full-fledged member of Social Security and Medicare," not to mention low-interest college loans and other federal enticements. The churches, universities, labor unions, and professions—these, too, have abandoned their former autonomy in the hopes of winning political power for themselves.

Nor does Nisbet draw much hope from the political scene at large. Contemporary liberalism has abandoned freedom for mindless equality. Conservatism is hardly better off, having become "an ideology seeking to capture democratic absolutism" rather than to repudiate it. Meanwhile, it remains divided from within by the competing voices of "military hawkishness, evangelicism, libertarianism, supply-siders, the power-obsessed Right, and others equally discordant." As in *Conservatism: Dream and Reality*, Nisbet is especially critical here of the evangelical Christians who have come to adopt "a nakedly political approach" to the issues that most concern them. Reagan himself is dismissed in the strongest terms for his advocacy of constitutional amendments concerning abortion and school prayer. "Not even Hitler," Nisbet writes, "dared carry the state, the totalitarian state, that far into the home and church."

THE book's third chapter, "The Loose Individual," gives impressionistic detail to the depressing analysis that has preceded it. As in many of the author's sociological writings, the sufferings unique to modernity loom large. Citing Tocqueville, who argued that political centralization unleashes egoism and self-seeking throughout society, Nisbet depicts the "deviant delinquent, alienated, anomic, bored, narcissistic," and otherwise troubled souls of the contemporary United States. The economy in his eyes is made up of Ivan Boeskys writ large; the churches, of hucksters and fallen demagogues. Ethics have all but evaporated, whether in the marketplace, the university, or the government. The middle-class family, too, is in crisis, led there by the rage for "equality" that has shaken other strongholds of tradition and moral example.

Into the vacuum left by the wholesale collapse of authority come anxiety, idle nostalgia, and apocalyptic visions of the future. In the universities, where progressivism rules, the utopian recasting of intellectual history has reached tragicomic proportions. Thus Marx is made a humanist, Freud a liberator and champion of human happiness. The world outside, with much trepidation and little to anchor itself, turns increasingly to self-seeking pleasures. Indeed, Nisbet concludes, "our society and culture today are manifestly closer to the complete cash nexus, the total monetary regime, than they were at the beginning of the century."

Nisbet closes his book with a brief and searching epilogue. Perhaps, he suggests, our most pressing troubles—"militarism, bureaucracy, the monetarization of the human spirit, and the trivialization of culture"—will themselves subside or decline. There are, after all, "no inexorable, unalterable laws against which the human will is impotent"; and the United States does not yet suggest "the relentless advance of senescence in the human being or the course of a cancer." In time, he suggests, the country may come to another awakening, perhaps even "the revolution in ideas" for which there is "dire need."

It is a tribute to Nisbet's open-mindedness that he ends his otherwise distressing discussion on so tentative and promising a note. In a similar spirit, the reader may well wonder whether the grounds for hope lie somewhat nearer to hand than the envisaged revolution in ideas. For if the portrait of the United States that Nisbet now paints is uncommonly vivid and provocative, it is also one worth subjecting to scrutiny.

LET us begin at the beginning, with Nisbet's preoccupation with the American military. His analysis of that phenomenon is probably the most one-sided ever to appear alongside the rhetoric of the Framers. It is true that American power is deployed around the world; that our allies and friends receive aid and weapons; that the budget for defense is large enough to shock many Americans, let alone the dead ones. Yet if facts like these are to shape our image of the American military, others demand to be recited, too.

The United States, for all its might, occupies no foreign territories. It has not engaged in territorial aggrandizement since the aberrant events, long overtaken, of the Spanish-American War. Do the nations that request and receive American arms or troops find aid forced on them by an ambitious imperial power? They are more likely to fear that the United States will abandon them as it abandoned South Vietnam. Nor is the cold war quite the chimera that *The Present Age* implies. The West Europeans and others who long for the day when they can secure themselves without American help could testify otherwise, as could the Poles, Czechs, Hungarians, Afghans, and others who know the uniform of "imperialism" when they see it.

A similar lack of perspective afflicts Nisbet's discussion of the defense budget. The United States today devotes about 6 percent of its GNP to defense. That number, far from representing an upward spiral, shows a clear trend toward decline; it is considerably lower, for example, than the proportion spent under President Kennedy in the years before the Vietnam war. (It is also roughly half the propor-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tion spent by Great Britain in the mid-1930's, years synonymous with the word "appeasement.")

Of course, the most telling comparison is not American spending measured against itself, but against the behavior of its major global adversary. One has only to consider—as Nisbet does not—the Soviet-fueled battlefields of Cambodia, Mozambique, El Salvador, Angola, Nicaragua, and Afghanistan, among others. It does not take the mind of a moralist to oppose aggression against American allies and trading partners, or to fear the economic and political consequences of an isolated United States.

Nisbet's portrait of the military establishment, too, suffers from a bias that has rarely overtaken his other writings. The Pentagon may indeed command more blood and treasure than the Framers in their worst nightmares foresaw. Yet its disposition is about as bellicose as, say, that of the Social Security administration. Under Ronald Reagan, the Secretary of Defense set forth an astonishing set of conditions for the exercise of American power; hardly a war in history, with the possible exception of the declaration against Japan after Pearl Harbor, would have satisfied them. Time and again in the course of policy-making in the 1980's, the Defense Department has been less likely to advocate the use of force than even the State Department, itself hardly a repository of martial virtue. If this is militarism, it is of a kind that would insult the honor of the true militarists of this century—and there have been some.

Perhaps the most confounding of Nisbet's assertions concern the ongoing "aggrandizement" of executive power. If aggrandizement is the charge, he appears to have apprehended the wrong suspect. The President today commands nowhere near the foreign-policy powers of his predecessors. The Congress, meanwhile, has during the last fifteen years imposed over a hundred restrictions on the foreign-policy powers of the executive branch. Most notorious is the War Powers Resolution, which encourages foreign adversaries to sit patiently with pencil and calendar while the American clock runs down. Other restrictions have curtailed such disparate activities as arms sales, intelligence operations, the dispatching of military and economic aid, and the protection of secrets. The President may indeed, as Nisbet charges, live more grandly today than any before him; if so, however, his luxury is a fig leaf to cover his shrunken powers.

NISBET is more compelling when he leaves Washington to examine the intersection of politics and ideas in the years since World War I. These passages show him at his best: tracing the pedestrian to the philosophical, the everyday to the abstract, the most unexamined details of American life to the political words and deeds that have affected them.

This is particularly vivid in his discussion of Rousseau. Nisbet cuts deftly through Rousseau's seductive poses—romantic, purist, pedagogue—and lays bare the rejection of right and liberty implicit in the idea of the general will. He convincingly outlines the appeal of those ideas for the modern political intelligentsia, "that aggregate of intellectuals and scholars dedicated to the state precisely as their medieval forebears were to the church."

There is much to be said for Nisbet's case against the political clerisy. Twentieth-century intellectuals, like the politicians they have sought to influence, have indeed shown an appetite for centralized, state-imposed "solutions," whether of the "national community," New Deal, or Great Society variety. Nor has that appetite declined notably in the years since 1980, as the continuing appeal of Mario Cuomo and of his vision of a "national family" confirms.

Yet one wonders, too, whether Nisbet's case may be somewhat more damning than is necessary as the 1980's near their end. It is true that the appeal by politicians of every stripe to centralized solutions shows no sign of waning. Moreover, it is easy to sympathize with Nisbet's dismay at a time when officials who have pledged to roll back federal spending instead advocate ever-larger budgets for their own offices and ever-expanded scope for their powers. Yet while there is much in Washington to distress any advocate of limited government, there is much elsewhere that would seem to ameliorate it.

THIS is particularly evident in the realm of ideas, the preeminent realm, as Nisbet has so brilliantly shown elsewhere, from which others take their ultimate direction. Here, momentum may not be so clearly on the side of Rousseau, even within the "degraded" precincts of the academy. Although the verdict on the esoteric pursuits that figure prominently in Nisbet's third chapter—deconstruction, minimalism, radical feminism—remains to be reached, as a sociologist, especially, Nisbet must be struck by the ongoing spectacle of students on today's university campuses who see many of their teachers as political anachronisms or worse. It is curious, too, that he neglects the debate over higher education sparked in part by the success of Allan Bloom's *The Closing of the American Mind.* However limited, these are changes that may not bode well for the academic orthodoxies Nisbet deplores.

One wonders, too, whether Americans elsewhere in the country are as enamored of "democratic absolutism" as Nisbet seems to fear. Tax revolts, workfare, IRA's, "privatization": these are only a few of the ideas that testify to a dissatisfaction with the welfare state. The think tanks, centers, and foundations that Nisbet consigns to the "political clerisy" now include a number of scholars and analysts who advocate exactly the sort of federalist policies that he believes have vanished. Are these, too, the handmaidens of the state?

Other signs of change are apparent in the private sphere. The sexual revolution appears spent, whether through its bouts with venereal disease, AIDS, abortion, or family breakups. Popular culture reflects the new mood; from movie houses to comic strips, it is short on feminism and free sex, long on child-rearing, the anxieties of the career woman, and dark morality tales about adultery and promiscuous sex. All this is not to say that

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Nisbet's fears for the "loose individual" are misplaced. But the question of which forces shall prevail over the conduct of everyday life would appear to be more open than the author of *The Present Age* believes.

IF THERE is much, then, in Nisbet's recent thought to provoke and enlighten, there is much too that invites qualification and dissent. When it comes to the present decade, however, his perspective all but deserts him. Obviously, there is something in the 1980's that has proved powerfully distressing to Nisbet and that lies at the root of his present discontent.

One clue suggests itself in Nisbet's otherwise bewildering treatment of conservative evangelicals, a group for whom he reserves his darkest prose. Their very mention calls to his mind "blinding hatred uncoiled in terror, arson, and wars without mercy." Yet conservative Christians, after all, became a presence in national policy only after the issues of greatest concern to them, such as abortion and the schools, had been systematically appropriated into the federal domain. If some of them now seek solutions in the form of constitutional amendments, there are others who advocate that such "social issues" be returned to state and local government. In any event, it is hard to understand why a movement so intent on preserving its own autonomy should receive such rough treatment at Nisbet's hands.

Perhaps the answer is that his animus against the religious Right reflects his larger set of grievances against the administration of Ronald Reagan, grievances which are painfully evident throughout the book. Nisbet is second to none in his harsh judgments of the current President, and there is scarcely a policy or event that fails to arouse his indignation. Thus, the Strategic Defense Initiative appears as "utopianism," Grenada as "a little bit of Armageddon." Even a detail as inconsequential as Reagan's archives is ridiculed by comparison with "the pyramids of Egypt," which "would be cheaper in the long run; even less royal in thrust." *Conservatism: Dream and Reality*, too, had its share of barbs for the Reagan coalition, but these were not nearly so prominent as they have now become. From the opening pages to the last sentence, with its tacit denigration of "recent White House occupants," *The Present Age* bristles with its condemnation of Reagan's tenure.

Such palpable disappointment with a President who was once touted as the greatest federalist of them all may go some way toward explaining the pessimism that suffuses Nisbet's book. It was the same Robert Nisbet, after all, who could still observe in the *Public Interest* three years ago that the election of 1980 "could fairly be seen as the glorious culmination of an ideological evolution that had begun three decades earlier." Nisbet's sympathy for that evolution, and for the ideas that gave it strength, has been a matter of record for some time. In recent years, it seems, he has examined the political triumph of those ideas and pronounced it pyrrhic.

Yet this verdict, like some others in *The Present Age*, may be premature. For many years, Robert Nisbet has illuminated as no one else the evolutionary essence of ideas, their importance to civic life, and their persistence, for better or worse, over long periods of time. The years under Reagan, too, should be cast in this meliorative light. No individual, not even a President, can be made the final arbiter of a tradition of thought whose lineage, as Nisbet himself has argued, includes the likes of John Adams and Lincoln, Tocqueville and Burke. To judge by the late 1980's, that tradition persists in more quarters, and with more vitality, than Robert Nisbet now permits himself to believe.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Books in Review

Policy vs. Pathology

AMERICA INVULNERABLE: THE QUEST FOR ABSOLUTE SECURITY FROM 1812 TO STAR WARS. By JAMES CHACE and CALEB CARR. *Summit Books. 367 pp. $19.95.*

Reviewed by GEORGE RUSSELL

REVISIONIST perspectives on U.S. foreign policy have been a booming industry since that far-off day in 1959 when William Appleman Williams published his radical classic, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy.* Although the variations have been virtually endless, the essential theme is that behind the myth of U.S. do-goodism and support for democratic values lie selfishness, rapacious capitalistic imperatives, warped anti-Communist messianism, etc., etc. Most of these hostile analyses have aimed at undermining any favorable summation of the postwar Pax Americana; a sub-genre, the Latin American foreign-policy critique, finds that the chain of U.S. perfidy stretches back in time much farther than that.

Until recently, what almost all of these exercises—some of them impressive pieces of scholarship, others decidedly less so—shared was a concentration on the global expansion of American power. Now there is a hot new product on the critical history market: the study of American overextension and decline. Although Leninist diatribes on this theme have been around for a while, the current boom involves less conventional (in the left-wing sense) and therefore more diverting forms of analysis. In the forefront is Paul Kennedy's *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*; not far behind, in many intellectual circles, is liable to be this arresting, quirky, quite flawed, and sometimes misleading work, co-authored by James Chace, a notable figure of the East Coast liberal foreign-policy establishment, and Caleb Carr, a relatively young foreign-policy researcher.

The thesis of *America Invulnerable*, briefly put, is that behind the 200-year rise of American power lies a collective psychosis, an obsession with perfect security, which has now reached the point of untenability:

> For more than two centuries, the United States has aspired to a condition of perfect safety from foreign threats. Alarmed by even potential dangers to the nation's security, Americans have forcefully responded to both real and imagined assaults against our own borders as well as against those of foreign nations and provinces we have seen as either strategically or politically linked to our own. . . . Yet the goal of absolute security has constantly eluded us. . . . To cope with these dangers, America has steadily expended an ever greater share of her national wealth and resources until—by the end of the 1980's—she finds them stretched to the very limit.

With a presidential election almost upon us, and the possibility of a revitalized Democratic coalition spanning the distance from Capitol Hill to the White House, it is not hard to see where this argument is aimed: at a very substantial reduction of U.S. military spending, especially abroad; a restructuring of U.S. alliances with Western Europe and the Pacific; and a new, post-Afghanistan policy of concert with the Soviet Union, especially on disarmament issues. After Reaganism, neo-Carterism.

One of the principal functions of *America Invulnerable* is to give this kind of foreign-policy approach a more sophisticated underpinning than it has enjoyed in the past. Certainly, James Chace, the senior author, has the credentials for the job. Managing editor of the august gray quarterly *Foreign Affairs* from 1970 to 1983, he migrated to the New York *Times Book Review* and thence to the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, where he is currently a senior associate. Chace has published a number of other works that urge the calculus of diminished ends and means in American foreign policy. His most up-to-date views have appeared in the Spring 1988 issue of the Carnegie-sponsored quarterly, *Foreign Policy*, where he outlines a much-reduced U.S. military commitment abroad and a new agenda that includes

> . . . working with the West Europeans to reduce the U.S. military presence on the Continent, *even should negotiations with the Soviet Union proceed haltingly or finally peter out.* It means reexamining U.S. military needs in the Philippines and in South Korea, as well as the defense costs of America's relationship with Japan. It means pursuing peace efforts in Central America, with an eye toward reducing military expenditures for the region. And it means, above all, taking seriously recent Soviet foreign-policy initiatives: proposals for cutting troop levels in Eastern and Western Europe, for reducing the number of arms and troops in northern Asia, for curbing naval developments in the western Pacific, for cooperating in the Persian Gulf and in the Arab-Israeli standoff, and for using the UN Security Council for peace-keeping missions and conflict control. [Emphasis added.]

Since paragraphs of Chace's historical analysis in the *Foreign Policy* article are lifted almost verbatim from *America Invulnerable*, the relationship between the book's thesis and these sweeping proposals is worth examining with some care. And care is certainly recommended when an analyst suggests that from the time of the burning of Washington by the British in 1814 to the announcement of the Strategic Defense Initiative, American history has been governed by something

GEORGE RUSSELL *is a senior editor at* Time *magazine.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Contemporary Issues From Princeton

The Restructuring of American Religion
Society and Faith since World War II
Robert Wuthnow

The Restructuring of American Religion is a major survey of the last four decades of American religious life—an intriguing and well-documented account of the dramatic changes that have occurred since World War II. Robert Wuthnow gathers a vast amount of factual information into a fast-paced narrative that answers numerous questions about what is *really* happening as religion and politics interact in the United States.

"Well-considered history, with sometimes surprising conclusions, that takes on added interest in the light of the recent Bakker/Swaggart debacles."
— *The Kirkus Reviews*

Studies in Church and State
John F. Wilson, Editor
Cloth: $25.00 ISBN 0-691-07328-7

Change and Stability in Foreign Policy
The Problems and Possibilities of Détente
Kjell Goldmann

Kjell Goldmann identifies the factors that may have an impact on whether a specific foreign policy is likely to endure or change and develops them into a theory of foreign policy stability. He then uses this theory to explore the reasons why West German-Soviet détente during the 1970s proved to be more enduring than the improvement in relations between the United States and the Soviet Union.

Goldmann also outlines a hypothetical scenario for a fully successful process of détente stabilization and examines the extent to which this scenario is realistic. The book ends with some thought about how to conduct a policy aimed at stable détente with an adversary.
Cloth: $35.00 ISBN 0-691-07778-9

International Incidents
The Law That Counts in World Politics
Edited by *W. Michael Reisman* and *Andrew R. Willard*

This provocative book shows that many international standards of acceptable conduct derive far less from adjudications, statutes, or treaties and far more from what is found to be acceptable in the conflicts that we today call international incidents.

The contributors demonstrate how law that counts has been developed, modified, and terminated in a variety of dramatic international incidents: the downing of Korean Air Lines Flight 007, the Harrods bombing, the Argentine invasion of the Falklands/Las Malvinas, the incursions of foreign submarines into Swedish waters, and others.
Paper: $12.95 ISBN 0-691-02280-1
Cloth: $35.00 ISBN 0-691-07772-X

Deadly Paradigms
The Failure of U.S. Counterinsurgency Policy
D. Michael Shafer

Michael Shafer argues that American policymakers have consistently and fundamentally misperceived the political context of revolutionary wars directed against American clients, and that because American attempts at counterinsurgency were based on faulty premises, these efforts have failed in virtually every instance.

At fault in American perceptions is a pervasive, compelling, but distorted vision of the Third World state as beleaguered modernizer and the United States as manager of modernization.
Cloth: $34.50 ISBN 0-691-07774-6

AT YOUR BOOKSTORE OR
Princeton University Press
41 WILLIAM ST. • PRINCETON, NJ 08540 • (609) 452-4900
ORDERS: 800-PRS-ISBN (777-4726)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

closely akin to a psychological aberration. As the authors of *America Invulnerable* express it:

> We are and always have been a nation preoccupied with security. But because of the special way in which we have defined that security, our perception has often taken a violent form that Americans themselves have been hard put to understand.

What is that form? Throughout history, say the authors, the U.S. has been "singularly unwilling to allow outside involvement in questions of national security," an approach thereinafter referred to as "unilateralist," or, in its most expansive form, "universalist."

Let us leave aside, but not for too long, the question of tautology in this description—what is national security? and how does one share involvement in it? The point, apparently, is to construct a model of American history that is founded in the psychology of perception. Aberrant psychology, at that. The sack of Washington was the initial trauma, the authors imply, in the American search for absolute security. This, the nation's leaders decided, *must not be allowed to happen again*. Trauma thus led to obsession, "characteristically American," with the activities of Britain in this hemisphere, "an obsession rivaled in American history only by the 20th-century preoccupation with Soviet Communism."

America Invulnerable is as much a journalistic exercise as a historical exposition, and it shows, especially in the book's structure and organization. Quoting Henry Adams, the authors engagingly admit that analyzing national character is a difficult enterprise, then slide over the problem by asserting that the response of national leaders to security issues "established patterns of behavior that eventually became national characteristics. . . ." From there it is only a small, if not necessarily logical, jump to the journalistic habit of examining *individual* characters, a leap soon taken.

A psychological portrait gallery follows. First comes Andrew Jackson, ruthless, pathologically anti-British, willing to bend the facts on the southern frontier in order to drive out the Redcoats and gobble up Florida. James Polk, the "nation's preeminent apostle of national security," nibbling away at the Southwest, annexing California, carving up northern Mexico. Henry Cabot Lodge, arguing for Pacific expansion. Teddy Roosevelt, of course, fretting about imperial German ambitions in the hemisphere. Woodrow Wilson, espousing liberal democracy while practicing intervention—and replacing fear of European imperialism with fear of Bolshevism.

The names come faster as *America Invulnerable* progresses, and its assertions concerning American behavior become less historical and more sweeping. Truman's commitment to Western Europe, we learn, grew out of a misperception of Stalin's commitment to a Communist takeover in Greece. Dean Acheson's famous memorandum arguing the case for intervention in Korea is described as a masterly summary of previous historical pleas for intervention in nonstrategic locales, entrenching a new kind of "inflated rhetoric" in U.S. unilateralism. The culmination, needless to say, is Ronald Reagan, SDI, the "heartfelt embodiment of America's search for invulnerability."

But in the nuclear age, the authors argue, the American search for perfect security can no longer be accommodated:

> In the pursuit of perfect security in an imperfect world, we have always felt it desirable to act on our own—not isolating ourselves from other nations of the world, but walking a solitary path among them toward the kind of safety that might free us of any and all threats to our exceptional land. . . .

No more; we cannot afford it:

> Security, as we approach the end of the second century of our history, can never be more than relative. . . . [This] will mean that despite our massive military and economic power and the blessings of a liberal democracy, we will be required to live as other great powers have lived in the past—with our safety, and the world's peace, dependent on a judicious accommodation of often conflicting national interests.

America Invulnerable ends more or less on that note of impending American maturity. But engaging, and even gratifying, as this sort of teleological analysis may appear (at last! mental health!), it is marked throughout by misleading assertions of continuity, fuzziness of concepts, and occasional inaccuracy. More worrisome still is the basic narcissistic assumption (by no means rare in the foreign-policy world from which these authors derive) that international stability is more a function of cognitive psychology than of relations of force.

The authors' very definition of American "unilateralism" begs this question. As Charles de Gaulle was wont to remind us, how else do great powers decide upon their interests, and act, other than alone? The "unilateral" history that Chace and Carr describe pejoratively can also be understood, as it is by America's allies and even by most of its enemies, as the historical, often opportunistic, sometimes accidental rise of a great nation—helped by the results of two world wars it did not cause—rather than as the expression through time of a geopolitical neurosis.

In this light, it is interesting to compare Chace and Carr's description of U.S. behavior with their description of Soviet behavior. The Soviets—Stalin anyway—do come in for criticism. "Personally and professionally, Josef Stalin was *as obsessed as any American leader of this or any other period* with the idea of making his nation safe from foreign threats" (emphasis added). One might say he was almost as sick as we were. But maybe not. For, the authors further note:

> Lenin and Trotsky had tried to interact with outside powers, but had been answered with the Siberian intervention and an economic blockade. All of these experiences convinced Stalin that Russia's security was her own affair, and, more specifically, *his* own affair, to be pursued in the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

transaction

Reviewers Say It Best

FIVE FOR FIVE *Reviews from* Contemporary Sociology

SOCIOLOGY AND ESTRANGEMENT
THREE SOCIOLOGISTS OF IMPERIAL GERMANY

Arthur Mitzman

"The bulk of Mitzman's book is taken up with the exposition of the successive stages of each one's [Tonnies, Sombart, and Michels] intellectual journey. It presents material that is worth knowing and tells a thought-provoking and depressing tale . . . . Mitzman's perspective is useful as an antidote to accounts of the development of social science that pay attention to rational elements only." Thomas Burger, *Southern Illinois University, Carbondale*

ISBN: 0-88738-605-9 (paper) 370 pp. $17.95

EXPERIENCING CREATIVITY
ON THE SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY OF ART

Robert N. Wilson

"Professor Wilson takes up creativity and a great deal more. It was sometimes hard for me to see the connection between one chapter and the next, but at the finish nothing seemed superfluous. I cannot recall an idle word in the entire book. He is always lucid and writes skillfully. His prose has music." John Manfredi, *University of Massachusetts, Amherst*

ISBN: 0-88738-045-X (cloth) 179 pp. $26.95

ON THE SOCIAL UTILITY OF PSYCHOPATHOLOGY
A DEVIANT MAJORITY AND ITS KEEPERS

Nathaniel J. Pallone

"This book centers around the functionalist argument that deviance and its institutionalization perform indispensable functions in preserving the status quo in society . . . . The book provides a stimulating, provocative, and entertaining overview of the contemporary role of psychiatry and how its practitioners, like the Inquisitors of Medieval Europe, serve very discernible political ends." Thomas Gabor, *University of Ottawa*

ISBN: 0-88738-048-4 (cloth) 92 pp. $24.95

FEAR OF CRIME
INCIVILITY AND THE PRODUCTION OF A SOCIAL PROBLEM

Dan E. Lewis and Greta Salem

"In this interesting and insightful book, Lewis and Salem attempt to go beyond conventional victimization perspectives in the study of fear of crime by focusing upon social control in the urban context . . . . The authors make a convincing argument for an approach to community crime prevention that would include attention not only to community cohesion and organization, but also to the access of communities to power and resources in the larger environment." David Weisburd, *Rutgers University*

ISBN: 0-88738-086-7 (cloth) 160 pp. $23.95

MIGRANTS FROM THE PROMISED LAND

Zvi Sobel

"For the student of Israeli society, of the larger Jewish experience, and of the shift from traditionalism to modernism (whatever these notions really mean) the book has a great deal to say . . . . The book is rewarding for the reader and must be graded a success for the writer." Paul Ritterband, *CUNY, City College and Graduate School*

ISBN: 0-88738-046-8 (cloth) 256 pp. $29.95

Transaction Publishers *Dept. RK , Rutgers-The State University, New Brunswick, NJ 08903*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

only way left to him by the non-Communist world—unilaterally.

In other words, where we were traumatized, irrationally, by the British, so too was Stalin traumatized—but rationally—by us.

A LOT of history is missing here, but with a purpose, since what is absent usually does not conform to the inherently narcissistic premise of the analysis. That premise, to repeat, is that if the U.S. psychology of perception were to change, the world would change. Thus, with Cuba, the authors write, "Whether the United States could have changed the outcome of the Cuban revolution through a more moderate policy . . . has remained a debate with no foreseeable conclusion." (Fidel Castro, who has revealed that his initial "moderation" was basically a ruse, is presumably excluded from this debate.) And in Grenada,

> a group of native military officers deposed the government and could not demonstrate to Washington's satisfaction that they were free of Communist influence.

Which proves, in the authors' view, that the Grenada intervention, like the 1965 invasion of the Dominican Republic, was based on the same neurotic misconception.

There is a great deal more of this sort of thing in *America Invulnerable*, all climaxing in SDI, described here as a brainchild of Edward Teller which was then foisted upon a credulous Ronald Reagan. The key that made SDI possible in the authors' view was the recurring dream of American unilateralism; a perfect defense, SDI was another way of going it alone. The difficulty is that they are describing the *metaphor* of SDI, and not at all what the U.S.—and the Soviets—in fact are groping to develop. Whatever else that thing is, it is a concrete manifestation not of a skewed psychology but of a technological rivalry within a defined relation of force. But then, in the circular, New Age thinking of *America Invulnerable*, that must be a distinction without a difference.

Weizmann & the British

ZIONISM: THE CRUCIAL PHASE. By DAVID VITAL. *Oxford University Press. 392 pp. $65.00.*

Reviewed by
GERALD M. STEINBERG

SEVENTY years ago, three decades before the Holocaust, the Jews of Eastern Europe were already a broken people, and their survival, both as individuals and as a community, was very uncertain. The Zionist movement had been created to alter this condition, but despite frenetic activity, by the eve of World War I no progress had been made toward reestablishing a national home in Palestine. Theodor Herzl, the charismatic founder of political Zionism, was dead, and his movement was in disarray. Meanwhile, in Palestine itself, the Jewish community, known as the *Yishuv*, was beginning to disintegrate under both Ottoman and local Arab pressure.

By 1928, this situation had changed radically for the better. Under the British Mandate, the *Yishuv* was growing, agricultural settlements had been founded, cities built, industries established, and political and social organizations developed. During this period, as anti-Semitism increased in Europe, large numbers of Jews could take refuge in Palestine for the first time. Although the British were never pleased with their role as mandatory power, and almost succeeded in reversing the tide, their presence created the conditions sufficient to allow for the reentry of the Jewish people into the world political arena, and for the revival of Jewish sovereignty in Israel.

In *Zionism: The Crucial Phase*, David Vital presents a detailed political analysis of the process by which the British entered into Palestine and the Zionist movement was revived. This volume, which marks the third installment in Vital's comprehensive history of political Zionism, covers the period from 1907 through 1919, and in it he continues to demonstrate the lucidity, scholarship, and attention to detail which characterizes his earlier work as well.

As Vital notes, "The fortunes of Zionism were transformed by the Great War." Yet the impact of the war was by no means clear from the beginning. Consistent with "the deepest instinct of the powerless," the Zionist leadership had opted to "play for safety and avoid involvement." Although the movement, formally neutral, could not function or arrange meetings from its headquarters in Berlin, it also could not move from that city for fear of offending the Germans. For all intents and purposes, its activities were frozen.

The transformation of the Jewish situation resulted from the complete abdication of this habit of caution and passivity. As the condition of the Jews, particularly in Eastern Europe, deteriorated, the Zionist policy of neutrality, and the immobilism it implied, came to be rejected by a group of rebels active in the movement though far from its apex. For this group, the survival of the Jewish people depended on developing, by whatever means were available, some form of Jewish political power, and using that power in conjunction with the Allies. To this end, Vladimir Jabotinsky set about forming the Jewish Legion to fight alongside the British and to liberate Palestine. In a different route to the same goal, Chaim Weizmann undertook efforts that culminated in the Balfour Declaration, in which His Majesty's government pledged to facilitate the "establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jews."

Vital firmly disposes of the common myth according to which the Declaration and the League of Nations Mandate (which legitimized the British commitment and embodied it in international law) were the personal achievements of Chaim Weizmann, a kind of reward for his contributions as a chemist to the war effort. Rather, in this as in other areas, British policy was designed to further specific political interests and objectives. By working with the Zionists, the Brit-

GERALD M. STEINBERG *is a member of the department of politics at Bar-Ilan University and a research fellow at the Leonard Davis Institute at the Hebrew University.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ish diplomats developed a rationale for renouncing the secret Sykes-Picot agreement which had provided for the division of Palestine between France and England, with the central sector, including Jerusalem, under an "international administration."

By the end of 1917, General Allenby, at the head of Allied forces, was poised to capture the entire region, and the strategic importance of Palestine to Great Britain suddenly appeared to grow. Furthermore, some Englishmen, such as Lloyd George, were convinced that in practice an international condominium would mean French control, with the Holy Places falling into the hands of "Agnostic Atheistic France." The Balfour Declaration provided Whitehall with a basis for advancing the British claim on the area, now to be undertaken in order to benefit the Jews who, under the Wilsonian concept of national self-determination, were entitled to their own national home.

Political strategists in London also hoped to use this rather vaguely worded document as a means of gaining Jewish support for the Allied cause. By showing sympathy for Zionism, the Foreign Office seems to have expected the millions of Jews in Eastern Europe to use their nonexistent influence to prevent the Russians from making a separate peace with Germany. It also aimed at enlisting the support of the American Jewish community, perceived to be very influential in Washington.

According to Vital, Weizmann, although the key figure of the period, was merely a passive instrument for the furtherance of Britain's machinations as a great power, and almost any other figure could have performed the same service. Echoing David Ben-Gurion, Vital portrays Weizmann as a naive idealist and Anglophile who relied on England's basic goodness to further the rightful claims of the Jewish people to a homeland in Palestine. At the same time, Israel's first president is also seen here as something of an operator and an opportunist. To the English, he claimed to speak for and represent the Zionists, and often Jewry as a whole, even though he did not have a position of significance in the organization. To the Jews, he claimed to have a special and personal relationship with England's ruling class that entitled him to a position of Zionist leadership.

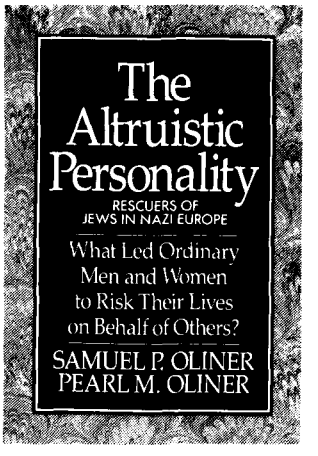
WHAT is the truth in this portrait? There can be no question of Weizmann's Anglophilia, or of his belief that "nothing would suit the needs of Jewry better on its first steps toward renewed independence than to be under British influence and tutelage." He ignored the signs, present from the beginning, of British cynicism and opportunism, as well as of a willingness (and even eagerness) to cater to the implacable Arab rejection of Jewish rights. Even during the 1930's and 40's he saw the increasing hostility of the British to Zionism as a matter of personalities, and expected leadership changes to lead to favorable policies. Although it is beyond the chronological scope of this volume, Vital creates here a foundation for the charge that in advocating cooperation and restraint in dealing with the British, Weizmann was at best naive, and at worst more an Englishman than a Zionist.

Nevertheless, from the evidence presented by Vital (and others), the distinction between exploiter and exploited seems far from clear. Weizmann may have been an idealistic Anglophile, and the Balfour Declaration and Mandate were indeed intended to serve Whitehall's interests, but the British presence in Palestine in the 1920's, which allowed for a resurgence of Zionism, might not have been achieved without him. Even Vital admits that "Weizmann . . . did more than anyone . . . to persuade the British that the Zionists would, in the final analysis, serve their purposes."

Similarly unconvincing is the charge that Weizmann's immersion in Zionism was the result of academic disappointments (he failed

HEROISM:
A LONE ACT OF COURAGE? *OR* AFFIRMATION OF PARENTAL VALUES?

What compelled ordinary people to risk their lives and the lives of their families to help total strangers in Nazi-occupied Europe? Drawing on The Altruistic Personality Project's study of over 700 rescuers and nonrescuers, Samuel and Pearl Oliner dispel the popular perceptions of moral heroism as lone acts of spontaneous courage. Instead they demonstrate how caring, responsible behavior is powerfully influenced by the standards set especially in the childhood home, when values are not only strongly held, but acted upon.


The Altruistic Personality
RESCUERS OF JEWS IN NAZI EUROPE
What Led Ordinary Men and Women to Risk Their Lives on Behalf of Others?
SAMUEL P. OLINER
PEARL M. OLINER

"...an extraordinarily important book, with implications even larger than those they spell out in their conclusion." —**Richard Neuhaus, Director, The Center on Religion & Society**

"What a book, what a revelation! Its message is that human decency, kindness, and altruism not only exist, but that the rescuers of Jews in Nazi-dominated Europe, who risked their lives to help condemned strangers, were not heroes, angels, or saints but ordinary human beings." —**Morton Hunt, author,** ***Social Research: The Scientific Study of Human Interaction***

424 pages/$24.95
Foreword by Rabbi Harold M. Schulweis

At bookstores or order from the publisher. To charge by phone to your VISA or MasterCard, call toll-free 1-800-323-7445 between 9 A.M. and 5:30 P.M. Eastern time.

THE FREE PRESS FP

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to win a professorship at Manchester).* In fact his Zionist activities began long before his scientific career or his arrival in England, and he never ceased to be a single-minded lobbyist and propagandist for the Zionist cause. "That it was [the Zionists'] task to persuade the British by logical, historical, political, and, if necessary, moral argument to adopt Zionism, Weizmann and his colleagues did not doubt," Vital writes.

While still in Manchester, Weizmann gained the support, indeed the enthusiasm, of C.P. Scott, the owner and editor of the Manchester *Guardian*. Later, Weizmann persuaded Sir Mark Sykes of the role the Zionists could play, and fed Lloyd George "bits and pieces of information" which turned out always to be useful in advancing the Zionist objective. Without these and similar efforts, it is doubtful that the British government would have issued the Balfour Declaration, which, whatever it gave the British, was the first significant accomplishment of political Zionism.

WEIZMANN, like Herzl, was clearly aware of the weakness of the Jews in the international political arena. He very carefully used all the available sources of Jewish power in his pursuit of the Zionist dream. He may have allowed Zionism to be exploited as a means by which the Sykes-Picot pact could be renounced, but the exploitation was mutual. By grossly exaggerating Jewish support of Zionism, and his own status within the movement, he cajoled a reluctant British Foreign Office into issuing the Declaration. He also gave the Zionist movement and organization a new focus and created the conditions for its revival and ultimate triumph.

Thus, whatever Weizmann's failures, particularly at later stages, during this critical phase of the Zionist movement he understood the importance of political power and was far from being merely the object of British policy. In his introductory essay, Vital declares that "In practice, the history of post-Herzlian Zionism is one of continuous adaptation of such ends to such means, now justified by hard political calculation, now rationalized by ideological casuistry." This policy was successful, and Weizmann was its architect.

* Weizmann's personality and the relationship between his academic and political interests are examined in recent biographies by Jehuda Reinharz and Norman Rose. See the reviews in COMMENTARY by Theodore S. Hamerow, November 1985, and by David Vital, September 1987.

Creating the Future

PASSAGE TO A HUMAN WORLD: THE DYNAMICS OF CREATING GLOBAL WEALTH. By MAX SINGER. Foreword by IRVING KRISTOL. *Transaction Books. 390 pp. $32.95.*

Reviewed by
NICHOLAS N. EBERSTADT

IF THE quest for material progress has come increasingly to direct our everyday activity, it does not seem to have bestowed upon us any corresponding insight into the nature of the world we are so busily creating. This imbalance between human capability and human understanding is most apparent in the efforts of well-informed people to describe what the future is likely to resemble.

The imbalance is not new. In the 19th century, as a Nobel laureate in economics once remarked, the most accurate projections of 20th-century circumstances could be found not in the prospective assessments of eminent economists and scientists but in the fantasies of science-fiction writers. The situation has not improved since then. More recent attempts to foretell the pace of material progress seem often to have mistaken not only the magnitude of change, but its very direction.

In the 1960's, for example, a best-selling book by a distinguished biologist announced that "In the 1970's . . . nothing can prevent a substantial increase in the world death rate." Yet in actuality the world was then, and continues now to be, in the midst of a health revolution—one that has steadily propelled global life expectancy to new highs, and has correspondingly depressed global death rates to record lows.

Subsequent studies, including the Club of Rome's *Limits to Growth* and the Carter administration's *Global 2000 Report to the President*, deployed mathematical equations and computer simulations to make the case that the world of the future would be characterized by growing population pressure, resource scarcity, and environmental stress. Definitive though these computer-generated conclusions may have seemed at first glance, they were (as was gradually appreciated) simply elaborate reiterations of assumptions originally programmed into their respective models.

It is, indeed, curious that at a time when the material contours of daily life are being demonstrably and often dramatically transformed by various forms of applied reasoning, an unreasoning pessimism should characterize authoritative and widely-read assessments of the prospects for mankind. Not, however, that this creed of pessimism about the economic future has gone unchallenged. In recent years, a small but increasingly influential group of authors has argued that the progress experienced over the past century or two may reasonably be expected to continue during coming decades and centuries. Prominent names in this circle include Julian Simon, the economist whose critiques appear to have been instrumental in prompting the National Academy of Sciences to revise and moderate its earlier pronouncements on the consequences of rapid population growth, and the late Herman Kahn, the prolific "futurologist" whose final years were largely devoted to fleshing out his "guardedly optimistic" vision of life in the 21st and 22nd centuries.

A new addition to this literature has now been offered by Max Singer, co-founder with Kahn of the Hudson Institute, and later its president. *Passage To A Human World: The Dynamics of Creating Global Wealth* is a thoughtful and

NICHOLAS N. EBERSTADT *is a visiting fellow at Harvard's Center for Population Studies and a visiting scholar at the American Enterprise Institute.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

engaging discussion of the trend toward worldwide affluence and of the trouble educated Americans have in recognizing it.

SINGER proposes that the world population two centuries hence might be ten billion, or even more. Such figures are similar to those in many of the more recent treatises expounding on the dangers of uncontrolled population growth—higher, actually, than in some. Singer's vision, however, is anything but apocalyptic. The world he sees is richer than the one we now inhabit: indeed, per-capita income is about ten times its current level, and average income for the world as a whole is almost twice as high as in the United States today. Health conditions are so favorable that life expectancy typically approaches the biological maximum encoded in one's genes. Despite a doubling, or more, of global population, this projected world does not seem more crowded than the one we know today: to the contrary, families enjoy more spacious and comfortable accommodations, and have greater access to parks and the recreational out-of-doors. And while consumption has enormously increased, thanks to a level of global economic activity over twenty times greater than our own, shortages of raw materials do not plague this world and pollution by most relevant measures has substantially diminished.

While the picture of the future that Singer sketches will be sure to surprise, and even startle, some readers, Singer's own line of reasoning is hardly radical. *Passage to a Human World* contemplates the future cautiously. Singer does not invoke as yet undreamed of scientific breakthroughs or require specific leaps of technological faith. In clear, nontechnical terms, he guides his readers through findings from a diverse array of disciplines, slowly and deliberately building a case for the feasibility of a more populous, and at the same time vastly more prosperous, world.

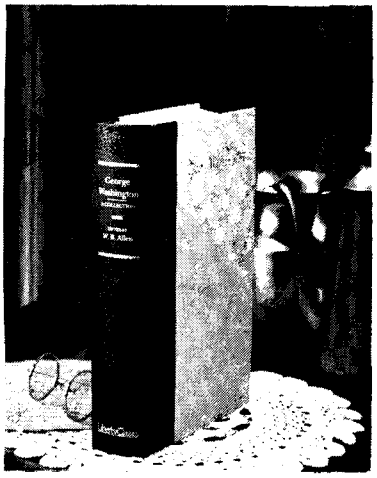
The essence of Singer's argument concerns the human mastery of nature. As he explains it, the process is well under way already. "We live today," he writes, "just about at the middle of a period of only a few hundred years, during which mankind is changing the world as it has never been changed before into the way that it will probably be from now on." Whereas "formerly nature dominated man (but not completely), after we finish our brief current passage man will dominate nature (but not completely)."

Singer notes especially the increased importance of education, specialized skills, and newly created technologies in the processes of production over the past century or so. The rise of the human factor within economic activity, he repeatedly emphasizes, is a trend fraught with significance, and some of its most important implications bear on the availability and use of natural resources. In brief, human ideas, in the form of technology, routinely bring economic

LibertyPress/LibertyClassics

GEORGE WASHINGTON: A COLLECTION
Compiled and Edited by William B. Allen

April 1989 marks the bicentennial of George Washington's presidency, yet this is the only one-volume compilation of his writings in print. Washington must now be acknowledged as a man of considerable political insight.



"George Washington: A Collection is an important addition to the literature on the American Revolution. The book provides a splendid introduction to Washington and his political beliefs, to the events of the Revolution through which he lived, and to the eighteenth-century world." — *Pauline Maier, Massachusetts Institute of Technology*

"Professor Allen's choices are excellent and should enable the reader to gain insight into Washington's political thought and his ideas about American liberty and the republic. It is a fine volume." — *Robert Middlekauff, The Huntington Library*

743 pages. Printed throughout in two colors with 15 illustrations.

Hardcover $26.00 0-86597-059-9
Paperback $ 9.50 0-86597-060-2
Liberty Fund edition, 1988

Please send me: *George Washington: A Collection*
Liberty Fund edition, 1988

Quan.		Price	Amount
	Hardcover	$26.00	
	Paperback	9.50	
		Subtotal	
		Indiana residents add 5% sales tax	
		Total	

☐ Enclosed is my check or money order made payable to Liberty Fund, Inc.

☐ Please send me a copy of your latest catalogue.

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

We pay book rate postage. Please allow approximately 4 weeks for delivery. All orders must be prepaid in U.S. dollars.

Mail to: Liberty Fund, Inc.
7440 North Shadeland Ave.
Department X104
Indianapolis, IN 46250

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

value to matter previously considered worthless (bauxite, petroleum, uranium, sand). By Singer's estimate, world population is five times higher today than it was 200 years ago, but average per-capita income has risen by a factor of ten. Thus, "the world is now wealthy enough to make possible fifty times as much consumption each year as there was two centuries ago. Since physical resources are the same . . . it must be intangibles that enable us to produce so much more."

The "passage to a human world," therefore, is a journey in which resources are, in a meaningful sense, *created.* While the stock of specific commodities (e.g., oil) may be diminished through human use, the routinization of research, innovation, and substitution indicates to Singer that "resources" will, practically speaking, generally and typically be less scarce—and less expensive—in the future. Thanks to man's ingenuity, he writes, "the finiteness of the Earth does not doom man to scarcity of essential raw materials or to a polluted environment."

IF ECONOMIC prospects for the future are actually so much less alarming than received wisdom would today suggest, why does a pessimistic perspective seem to have so much resonance in informed discussion? Singer holds that an "edifice of error blocks our view" of the future's true economic potentialities. That "edifice of error," in his judgment, is an intellectual and emotional construct to which "university-oriented Americans" (a group he places at roughly a tenth of the overall population) are today particularly susceptible. Such people, he believes, tend currently to exhibit "low national morale," which in turn predisposes them to be pessimistic about a necessarily uncertain future.

Singer may well be right about all this, but his observations about the social geography of pessimism are unfortunately more impressionistic, and thus less persuasive, than the other portions of his book. He explicitly refuses to speculate on the *reasons* for the currency of the outlook he describes, and in the end leaves the reader intrigued, but unsatisfied.

If Singer sets himself against the pessimists, however, he himself is no starry-eyed believer in science and the benevolence of human nature. Far from it. "People should not kid themselves," he warns, "that because a change is necessary it is good for everyone and harms no innocent victims." For, he continues, "Even if there were no malice or greed, immense amounts of suffering and sacrifice would be required to achieve economic growth." And Singer is extremely careful in judging the "human world" he envisions. "This book," he states, "makes no claim that the future will be better than the past. We humans have amply demonstrated our power to do evil and create unhappiness. . . . In a human world the main dangers, also, are human creations." In Singer's view, mankind will retain its capacity to choose between good and evil—and to make mistakes.

Simple though this concession may seem, it serves to confute all mechanistic thinking about "the long run," whether of the optimistic or pessimistic variety. Rather, Singer's aim in *Passage to a Human World* is to restore to populations of the future that preeminently human dimension of moral choice which so many of today's futuristic projections have stripped from them. It is an aim which this interesting, even exciting, book consistently realizes.

The Last Modernist

GEORGE BALANCHINE, BALLET MASTER. By RICHARD BUCKLE in collaboration with JOHN TARAS. *Random House. 403 pp. $29.95.*

Reviewed by TERRY TEACHOUT

ON THE surface, the English dance critic Richard Buckle would seem eminently qualified to write a biography of George Balanchine, the greatest choreographer of the 20th century. Buckle is the author of the definitive modern biography of Serge Diaghilev, founder of the Ballets Russes and Balanchine's first employer; he edited *Ballet,* which Edwin Denby called "the most powerful dance magazine in Europe," and served as ballet critic for the London *Sunday Times* from 1959 to 1975. Moreover, Buckle knew Balanchine personally from 1950 on, and recognized him as a master choreographer at a time when other English dance critics were still dismissing the creator of *Serenade* and *Apollo* as a vulgar modernist enmeshed in the coils of abstract theory.

Why is it, then, that *George Balanchine, Ballet Master,* is so unsatisfactory? Part of the problem has to do with the high standards set by Buckle's *Diaghilev* and *Nijinsky,* two of the most comprehensive dance biographies ever written. George Balanchine's professional life alone justifies an equally ambitious book. Balanchine, after all, made ballets for six decades, worked closely with Diaghilev and Igor Stravinsky, and founded the New York City Ballet. The 1982 *Choreography by George Balanchine: A Catalogue of Works* runs to over 400 pages.

In addition, Balanchine's backstage life was the stuff of a triple-decker novel. He married four times and had romantic involvements with countless other women. One could carve a decent opera libretto or a tawdry TV miniseries out of Balanchine's marriages to Vera Zorina, a Hollywood beauty who did not return his love, or to Tanaquil Le Clercq, the brilliantly gifted ballerina who was stricken with polio at the age of twenty-seven and never danced again. His relationship with Suzanne Farrell, the great dancer who inspired much of his later work, is already the subject of at least one book currently in progress.

To put the flesh of biographical detail on so long and eventful a career would require a book comparable in length to, say, Leon Edel on Henry James. What Richard Buckle has produced instead is a great deal more modest—and commensurately disappointing. Next to his 600-page *Diaghilev, George*

TERRY TEACHOUT *is a member of the editorial board of the New York* Daily News.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Balanchine, Ballet Master seems little more than a sketch for a full-length biography. Important primary sources are overlooked or misread. Important ballets like *Cotillon* and *Liebeslieder Walzer* are given cursory treatment. While the book was largely written on the basis of interviews conducted by Buckle and the choreographer John Taras, who worked with Balanchine for many years, these interviews do not seem to have been particularly exhaustive, especially in the case of Suzanne Farrell, and Tanaquil Le Clercq was not interviewed at all.

The strength of *Diaghilev* and *Nijinsky* lay in Buckle's proliferating, even indiscriminate, accretion of facts. In the absence of this kind of overwhelming detail, Balanchine emerges from the pages of *George Balanchine, Ballet Master* as a vaguely drawn stick figure. The pungent, vivid personality to be found in Solomon Volkov's *Balanchine's Tchaikovsky*, Bernard Taper's *Balanchine*, or Joseph Mazo's *Dance Is a Contact Sport*, not to mention in the numerous memoirs written by dancers who worked with him, simply fails to come across. Buckle does no better with his secondary characters, especially Lincoln Kirstein and Jerome Robbins, Balanchine's most important colleagues at New York City Ballet, who become shadowy supernumeraries rather than distinctive figures in their own right.

But the trouble goes deeper than that. Despite having been one of the earliest and most perceptive admirers of Balanchine's work, Buckle has somehow managed to write a book which is no better at explaining its subject's artistic significance than at conveying the drama and high romance of his private life.

Within the world of dance, it is hard to find anyone unwilling to acknowledge George Balanchine's importance. The difficulty lies in fitting him into the larger picture of 20th-century art. Balanchine, of course, is one of the central figures of "neoclassicism," the conservative branch of modernism. Like Stravinsky, his musical hero, Balanchine developed a distinctively modern voice that was also deeply rooted in tradition. ("Let us return to the past," Giuseppe Verdi said in 1870, "it will be a step forward.") Shunning the hermetic, experimental modernism of a Joyce or a Schoenberg, he preferred to use the established language of classical ballet as a foundation for the radical innovations of works like *The Four Temperaments* and *Agon*.

Because of this preference, what Balanchine did is still known as "ballet." By contrast, what a Martha Graham or a Doris Humphrey does is known as "modern dance." The paradox is that by deriving his choreography from the classical ballet of the 19th century instead of trying to develop a non-classical movement vocabulary of his own, Balanchine was liberated to become the first truly modern choreographer. That this was so became clear at the first performance of *Episodes*, a work on which Balanchine and Graham collaborated in 1959.

Episodes is set to the complete orchestral works of Anton Webern. Graham's part of the collaboration was a meditation on the death of Mary, Queen of Scots. Balanchine, on the other hand, constructed a plotless ballet in which the highly compressed anxieties of Webern's music were translated into an indelible succession of angular, disturbing movements which made Graham's brand of "modernism" look quaint.

BUT if Balanchine is (in Joseph Epstein's phrase) "the last modernist," Richard Buckle, for one, is distinctly reluctant to view him as a peer of Eliot and Stravinsky and Picasso and Waugh. For all his clarity of perception, Buckle is still the quintessential balletomane, a man as much in love with the romantic trappings of ballet as with ballet itself. It is quite possible to read this book without realizing that its subject was not merely a gifted choreographer but one of the major creative figures, irrespective of medium, of this century.

Nor does Buckle seem to grasp the implications of the spread of George Balanchine's work, a remarkable phenomenon to which he refers only glancingly. "Ballets are like butterflies," Balanchine liked to say. "Who wants to see last season's butterfly?" But Balanchine will not only be remembered as the greatest choreographer of the 20th century but as the first choreographer whose work has been systematically preserved and transmitted on a large scale to other companies. Most of his major ballets have been notated and videotaped. In addition, a growing number of Balanchine-trained

"THERE ARE CIRCUMSTANTIAL reasons why today's premature polls should break against Bush. Bush wrapped up his nomination early in March, after which he had nothing much to do. Michael Dukakis had a nice long workout on the punching bag of Jesse Jackson, lasting all the way until June 7. Under these circumstances, Bush would be in a trough if he were Alexander the Great."

To subscribe to *National Review* call 1-800-341-1522, or write NR, 150 East 35th Street, New York, NY 10016

Brandeis and Frankfurter--

Robert Burt provides a fascinating examination of the role of the Jew as insider and outsider in American society as it applied to the lives of Supreme Court Justices Louis Brandeis and Felix Frankfurter. In the process, he offers a fresh interpretation of both Justices' careers.

Two Jewish Justices

Outcasts in the Promised Land
by Robert A. Burt
$19.95 at bookstores or order toll-free (800)822-6657. Visa & MasterCard only.

University of California Press
Berkeley 94720

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

dancers and choreographers now lead companies that perform his work regularly. Balanchine's neoclassic ballets are thus becoming a true worldwide repertory, the first such in the history of ballet. At a time when the language of postmodern dance appears increasingly stale and exhausted, the likely consequences of this development on the future of choreography are incalculable—and encouraging.

That *George Balanchine, Ballet Master* should have failed as a simple narrative of the day-to-day details of Balanchine's career is a matter of literary skill. That it should have failed as a dramatic recounting of the passions of his private life is a matter of literary ambition. But that it should have failed as the story of an *oeuvre*, of its scope and significance and influence, is far more serious. We are still very much in need of a book that will sum up Balanchine, not so much for the benefit of the lovers of dance who already know his worth as for the rest of the world of art.

Among the Rich

MONEY AND CLASS IN AMERICA. By LEWIS H. LAPHAM. *Weidenfeld & Nicholson. 243 pp. $18.95.*

"OLD MONEY": THE MAKING OF AMERICA'S UPPER CLASS. By NELSON W. ALDRICH, JR. *Knopf. 297 pp. $19.95.*

Reviewed by ROGER STARR

EACH of these books is by a representative of the patrician, aristocratic, or equestrian class—the choice of term being a function of which part of which book is under scrutiny—and each author expresses at least some degree of dissatisfaction with the value system in which he was schooled. That concludes the catalogue of their similarities.

In *Money and Class in America*, Lewis Lapham, the editor of *Harper's*, has written what purports to be an attack on money. It turns out to be an attack, first of all, on the people who, like Lapham's San Francisco forebears, have had money for generations. It then becomes an attack on people who have new money. The attack broadens to include all Americans, who are assumed to be obsessed with money. Then it broadens further, into an attack on the human race. Well, not quite the whole human race. Though he scans the globe and history for useful tidbits with which to season his accusations, Lapham exempts from criticism those societies America opposes, like the Soviet Union, North Vietnam, the Sandinistas. He hints, though never quite saying so, that his compatriots would do well, as a first step toward redemption, to allow themselves to be purged by those they foolishly consider their enemies.

Lapham's disillusionment with mankind was first engendered, he says, by the way the Hotchkiss School, an academy for the sons of the elite, tried to fit him into a money-mad, class-obsessed society. It was deepened in later life by the public spectacle not so much of tragedy, high crimes, misdemeanors, or fallings from grace, as of some fairly trivial misfortunes, missteps, and breaches of taste which he regards as socially significant. His sources for these include gossip columns, information gleaned over the lunch table, newspaper and television reports, and dialogue emanating from events like the *Tonight Show*. There are occasional sorties into History, with a capital H, which offer a chance to hurl glancing blows at the diplomacy of George III, Marie Antoinette, and the black pearls of Anne of Austria.

The mortal sin of these last-named personages, as of all old-rich, new-rich, and never-rich Americans, is avarice. Yes, Lapham's is another in the chorus of contemporary attacks on greed. The idea that Ethiopians are hungry because some New Yorkers eat at Lutèce is of course not new with Lapham (Armenians starved, my mother suggested, because I lingered over my spinach), but he does take it one or two steps further. Specifically, he perceives a moral connection between Third World poverty and the treatment of coins in San Francisco's Pacific Union Club, of which his father was a member. It seems the club's kitchen staff had to wash all coins proffered by members in exchange for cigars and other sundries; only after being scrubbed and rinsed were they replaced in the cash drawer, fit to be given into members' hands. By this parable, Lapham means to implicate the "criminal nakedness" of the American effort to hide, by means of charitable donations to African countries, the fact (for so he regards it) that famine in those countries has been caused by American policy.

LAPHAM'S discussion of social class in America is equally inspired. Though money and power do sometimes overlap in the United States, Lapham ignores the fact that not all possessors of great wealth are members of its leading or most prestigious families; nor are all Americans wealthy who enjoy first-class status. Lapham also ignores the fact of American interclass mobility. His purpose is to deprecate not only established possessors of wealth and position but arrivistes as well, and in the process to deprecate, especially, the middle class.

The three classes Lapham does notice—the old rich, the new rich, and the middle class (which he believes is eating its heart out to join the other two)—are lumped together by him under an idiosyncratic rubric of his invention, the "equestrian classes." That he should coin a term that is itself essentially obsolete can be taken as a broad hint. He wants us to know that the present-day middle and upper classes are, or should be, as obsolete as horse-ownership.

What, then, would he like to see replace them? Apparently, a new class, uncorrupted by the absurd preoccupations of the post-industrial capitalist world. One cannot help wondering what would happen to Lewis Lapham himself in such an eventuality. Perhaps he thinks the triumphant revolutionaries of the post-industrial world will excuse from retribution those who can give evidence by their

ROGER STARR *is a member of the editorial board of the New York* Times. *His most recent book is* The Rise and Fall of New York City.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

writings of having repudiated their class origins prematurely. Good luck to him.

NELSON WINTHROP ALDRICH, JR. comes to the typewriter as the member of the fourth generation of a family that has been as prominent in the Eastern Seaboard establishment as the Lapham family was on the California coast. His great-grandfather, the first Winthrop Aldrich, a poor boy from a long-established New England family, became a U.S. Senator and retired from Congress with far more money than he could have assembled honorably. Indeed, the Senator was a prominent target of muckrakers, having sponsored legislation that fortified the position of the Sugar Trust at the expense of American consumers and having invested the proceeds in street railways, greatly to his own and his descendants' financial benefit. He also built the family stronghold, a baronial estate in Rhode Island. His daughter, the author's great-aunt Abby, married John D. Rockefeller, Jr.

Aldrich's attitude toward his namesake and family progenitor is a likable mixture of shame and affection. He wonders how the Senator bore the attacks the righteous leveled at him (he seems not to have considered that the elder Aldrich may simply have found them irrelevant); and he sympathizes with Winthrop I's sense of dynasty. Nor is this the only place in his book where Aldrich acknowledges the pleasure and pride he takes in his family. At times he expresses a nostalgic fondness for the scenes and objects of his childhood that reminds one of Vladimir Nabokov's memories of St. Petersburg.

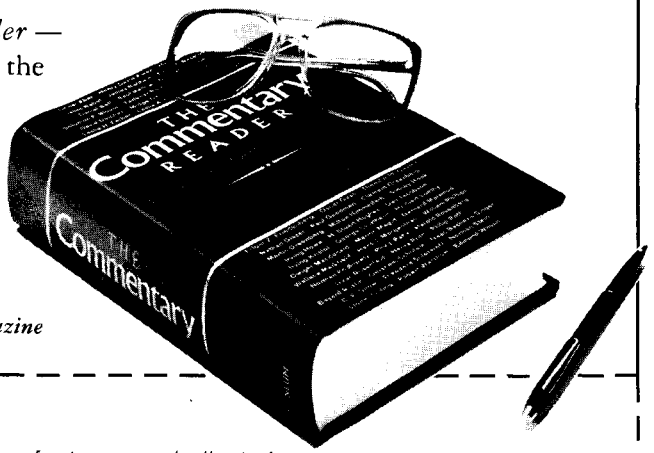
A dogged classifier, Aldrich divides the Old Money class into two groups, Patricians and Aristocrats, the first more serious than the second, more public-minded and devoted to good works. Boarding schools are also divided into two groups: St. Midas and Academy. The first consists of places like Groton and St. Paul's, which concentrate on character; the second, comprised solely of Exeter and Andover, on achievement. (These distinctions have faded, Aldrich acknowledges, as the "synecdochic Harvards" into which the various schools feed their products have intensified their own intellectual and academic requirements.)

Aldrich's greatest problem is to define what exactly he means by Old Money. He starts with families whose fortunes are entailed, governed perpetually by the terms of some remote ancestor's will, like the Bennets in *Pride and Prejudice*. But this does not get him very far. Ultimately he comes up with two alternative formulas. One is that the family be subject to what he calls the Hemingway Curse. The reference alludes to an often quoted conversation between Ernest Hemingway and F. Scott Fitzgerald, in which Fitzgerald alleged that the very rich are different from the rest

A special offer for you . . .

Enter a three-year subscription and get a FREE bonus—The Commentary Reader

A limited number of copies of *The Commentary Reader* — a selection of 51 of the finest articles and stories from the first twenty years of **Commentary** (1945-1965) — are available FREE! Simply return the subscription application below to begin receiving **Commentary** every month as well as this 763-page anthology of distinguished writing.



Commentary *America's Most Influential Magazine*

☐ **YES!** Enter my 3-year pre-paid subscription to **Commentary.** Please send my copy of *The Commentary Reader* immediately.

I prefer to pay as indicated.

☐ My check for $99 is enclosed

☐ Please charge $99 to my credit card

☐ American Express ☐ Master Card ☐ Visa

(Add $7 per year for foreign and Canadian)

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

_____ Expires _____

Signature _____

COMMENTARY • 165 EAST 56th STREET • NEW YORK, N.Y. 10022

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of us, to which Hemingway responded, yes, they have more money. But Old Money people are also more than money, Aldrich insists, and his second criterion is an attempt to account for the "something more."

Old Money people, Aldrich tells us, are distinguished from other Americans by not being market-oriented. This gentle and thoughtful writer reserves some of his harshest words for market orientation in general and for the neoconservatives in particular—people who, in his fantasy of them, believe that everything should be marketable and valued at the price buyers and sellers put on it. Market people, Aldrich imagines, insist not only that everything has a price and should have one, but that the value of a man is properly set not at what he is but at what he does or can be bought for.

Leaving aside Aldrich's ignorance of what neoconservatives think about these matters, it is understandable that a chronicler of Old Money should get nervous about anything remotely resembling a market test of human value. After all, many descendants of Old Money families do nothing at all. Lucky are they, Aldrich writes, who come into a fortune that is tied up in an enterprise; but even that is changing, as fewer and fewer one-family enterprises in this country remain solid enough to guarantee heirs a significant role in management. How then are Old Money people to express their transcendence of market values?

War, Aldrich points out, has historically provided opportunities in which Old Money can be a service to society. And indeed the Old Money class encouraged America's entry into World War I and in the course of it scored some of its highest achievements as a class. But then came the postwar period, which saw a widespread disaffection, including within the Old Money class itself, from the values historically associated with it. This loss of confidence in the entire principle of *noblesse oblige*, which is after all the main rationalization for the existence of a privileged caste in a democratic society, has continued to this day, and Aldrich, for one, wonders whether it has any applicability at all in the circumstances of contemporary life.

The answer would seem simple enough. In a country without an established church, Old Money families, call them patricians or aristocrats, are, or were, the primary custodians of traditional moral values. This is a role which in the 19th century they fulfilled with a certain distinction, most strikingly in the abolitionist cause. But in our century, Old Money families have repeatedly failed to provide moral leadership of any kind. In domestic affairs, when slavery was replaced by a legal system that in the 1920's and 1930's ground down Americans of color, hardly a word of protest was heard from Old Money. An honorable exception were members of the Phelps-Stokes family, who established a foundation dedicated to encouraging equality for blacks, but for the most part the initiatives came from elsewhere: from Henry Phipps, a new-money man who set up a foundation to provide urban housing for Negroes, and from Jewish merchants like the Rosenwalds and the Spingarns. In the 1960's and 70's, too late, some of the more alert members of the Old Money class awoke to embrace the mathematical formulas for solving the problem of the underclass which their former indifference helped to create.

In international affairs, the ongoing crisis posed to our country and our culture by the rise of 20th-century totalitarianism, in all its various guises, has been, to the Old Money class, a matter of indifference or worse. Indeed, it is sad to report that Aldrich himself dismisses those who are opposed to totalitarianism today as people fearful of modernity and uneasy at the prospect of change.

Is there no hope of moral leadership from this class? Thinking of the energy that came into the family when Nelson W. Aldrich, Jr.'s great-aunt married John D. Rockefeller, Jr., one concludes that what Old Money families need most of all, whether their name is Aldrich or Lapham, is a continuing and incessant infusion of new blood.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Nuclear energy, not foreign oil, is the best way to prevent electricity shortages

Electricity is so vital to our economy and our way of life that a shortage of electricity is unthinkable. Yet some parts of the country are already experiencing brownouts during peak periods of demand. The question is not "Will we run out?" The question is "What price will we have to pay?"

Our electricity demand will outgrow our present supply. It is only a matter of time. Federal planners believe that our current generating capacity may not be enough to supply our peak electrical demand in the 1990s.

America's electricity use has steadily increased for the last 50 years, and has grown over 45% since the 1973 Arab oil embargo. This growing electricity demand is already forcing us to turn to oil.

Imported oil: a dangerous fix

The longer we wait to build new coal and nuclear plants, the more we will have to depend on oil. Using more oil plants would increase our foreign oil imports, worsen our trade deficit, and make America even more dangerously dependent on foreign countries for crucial energy.

More nuclear plants needed

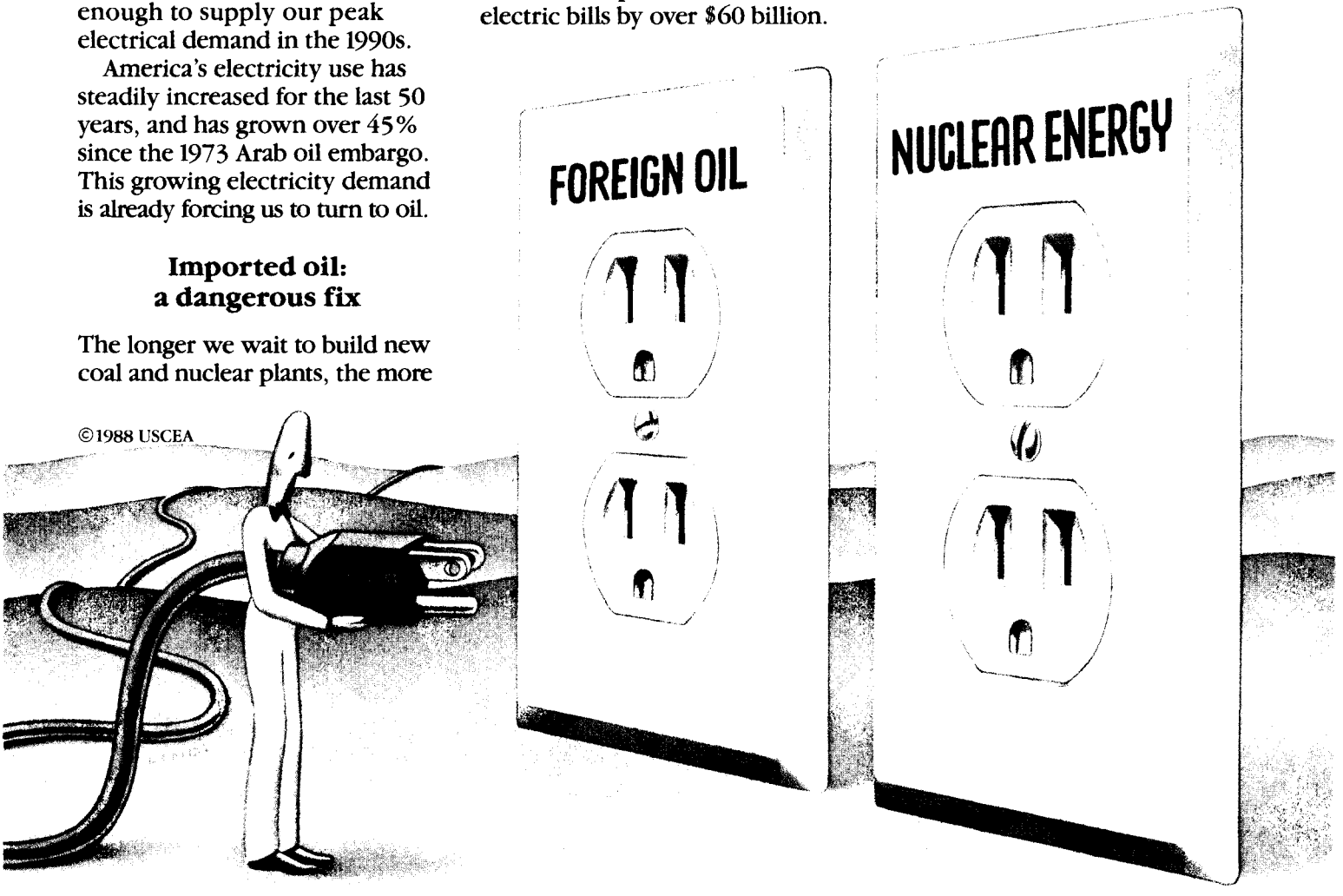
Nuclear energy is already America's second largest source of electricity after coal. By reducing the use of foreign oil to make electricity, nuclear plants have saved America $105 billion in foreign oil payments since 1973. Nuclear plants have also helped cut consumer electric bills by over $60 billion.

Nuclear energy reduces America's dependence on foreign oil, not only at electric power plants, but wherever electricity replaces oil. It supplies a large part of the electricity that our economy needs to prosper.

If you'd like more information on making America more energy independent, write to the U.S. Council for Energy Awareness, P.O. Box 66103, Dept. SH17, Washington, D.C. 20035.

Information about energy America can count on

U.S. COUNCIL FOR ENERGY AWARENESS



©1988 USCEA

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

WHILE IT'S EXCITING TO OBSERVE BEAUTY, IT'S EVEN MORE THRILLING TO ENHANCE IT.

Some men have the ability not only to embrace beauty, but to revel in it. They joyfully acknowledge that there is a particular pleasure in giving something rare and lovely. The rarest and loveliest object of all being a fine quality diamond of a carat or more.

Thirty tapered and straight baguettes flanking the 3 carat marquise-shaped centerstone make this stunning Nova ring, "Pirouette," exceptional.

Your jeweler can show you many other pieces of quality diamond jewelry that will reflect your own taste and style. And tells the world that you delight in that which is truly and eternally beautiful. Nova designs are available at fine jewelry stores. For the one nearest you, call: 800 282-6644.

A diamond is forever.

© Nova Stylings, Inc., 1988

NOVA

NOVA STYLINGS, INCORPORATED

DIAMONDS AS EXCEPTIONAL AS THE WOMAN WHO WEARS THEM.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED